September 2017

Salt

The Art & Soul of Wilmington

Home & Garden Issue

Glamour Aloft - *Inside Dennis Hopper's Former Pad*

Arboretum Man • Kinston Comes to the Port City • A Walk on the Wild Side

Luxury Portfolio Q & A

WHO IS LUXURY PORTFOLIO?

Luxury Portfolio International® is the luxury division of Leading Real Estate Companies of the World® (LeadingRE) – the largest network of independently-branded real estate firms represented by 565 brokerages in 65 countries. This global network produced $62 Billion more U.S. home sales ($368 Billion total) than the closest competitor.

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Every year, over three million consumers visit LuxuryPortfolio.com to browse on a site dedicated to significant properties. The site's high-net-worth buyer's average household income is $1.12 million, and 53% own a second home. In the U.S. alone, LuxuryPortfolio.com curates more properties priced over $1 Million than any other luxury property website.

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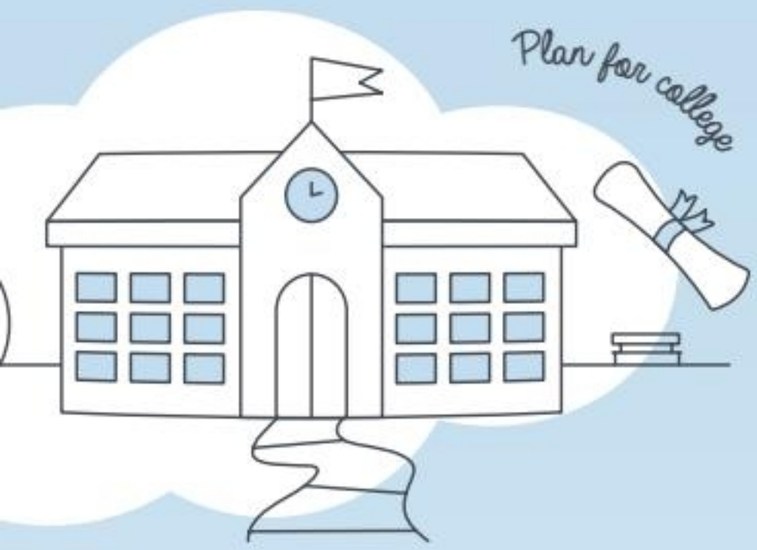

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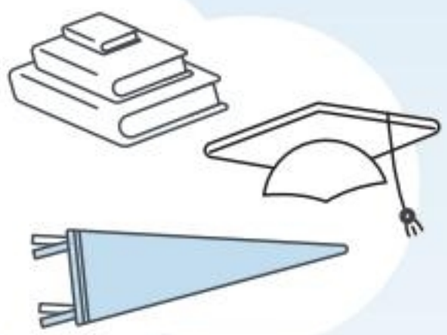

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1205 Great Oaks · Landfall · $2,995,000

Just what you have been looking for! New construction on the Intracoastal Waterway in Landfall.

2229 Masons Point Place · Landfall · $1,245,000

Beautifully sited atop one of Landfall's waterfront bluffs, this Nick Garrett built house directly overlooks Howe Creek with views of the ICW & the Atlantic. The shake and stone custom design features an open floor plan with fantastic views from practically every room.

1906 London Lane · Landfall · $1,150,000

Quality built by Old South Building, this brick low country architecture features a rocking chair front porch, an open floor plan with 10' ceilings and spacious rooms that overlook a huge pool, fenced rear yard and Landfall's Dye golf course. The over sized wooded lot faces south to capture great light and the prevailing breeze.

2117 Lee Shore Place · Landfall · $948,000

Outstanding Water Views! Overlooking the calm tidal waters of Howe Creek, this low maintenance all brick Landfall home features an open floor plan with a vaulted ceiling, great room and first floor master suite. Upstairs are three bedrooms, 2 full baths loaded with closets, built-ins and walk-in storage.

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2106 Stillwater Place · Landfall · $749,000

Located on the first green of Landfall's Jack Nicklaus designed ocean course, this all brick house features an open floor plan with 3 bedrooms on the first floor each with a private bath including a spacious master suite with his and her closets, walk-in shower with frameless glass enclosure and granite counters.

2225 Tattersalls Drive · Glen Meade · $735,000

Newly built in 2004, this all brick Georgian design features formal areas without the walls. Ten foot ceilings, gorgeous hardwood floors, heavy crown moldings, granite/stainless kitchen and a first floor master suite all access the covered porch with stamped concrete and outdoor fireplace...the perfect spot for fall football.

1403 Quadrant Circle · Landfall· $1,199,000

A Landfall Georgian masterpiece, this all brick executive home sits high on a wooded knoll overlooking Quadrant Circle pond. Completely updated this open floor plan features large rooms, exquisite moldings including raised panel den off of the first floor master

727 S. Lumina Avenue · Wrightsville Beach · $3,275,000

Wrightsville Beach south end oceanfront! This rare family compound features a main house and detached guest house in a walled compound with 2 driveways for plenty of guest parking. Features all new flooring, carpeting and have been freshly painted inside and out.

1427 Pembroke Jones Drive · Landfall · $739,000

This low country design is located in Landfall's cherished first phase and offers broken views of the Pete Dye Lake. From stepping into the marble foyer to the vaulted sunken living room; from the spacious new kitchen overlooking breakfast area and sunroom to the first floor master suite with new bath (including frameless shower) and his and her walk-in closets.

1608 Landfall Drive · Landfall · $1,695,000

When only the best will do. "Las Palmas" offers security, serenity and privacy with the double villa lot setting completely fenced and gated. Located between the Intracoastal Waterway and Landfall's Pete Dye Clubhouse and golf course, this resort styled family compound features two brick residences centered around an elegant salt water pool and cascading fountain.

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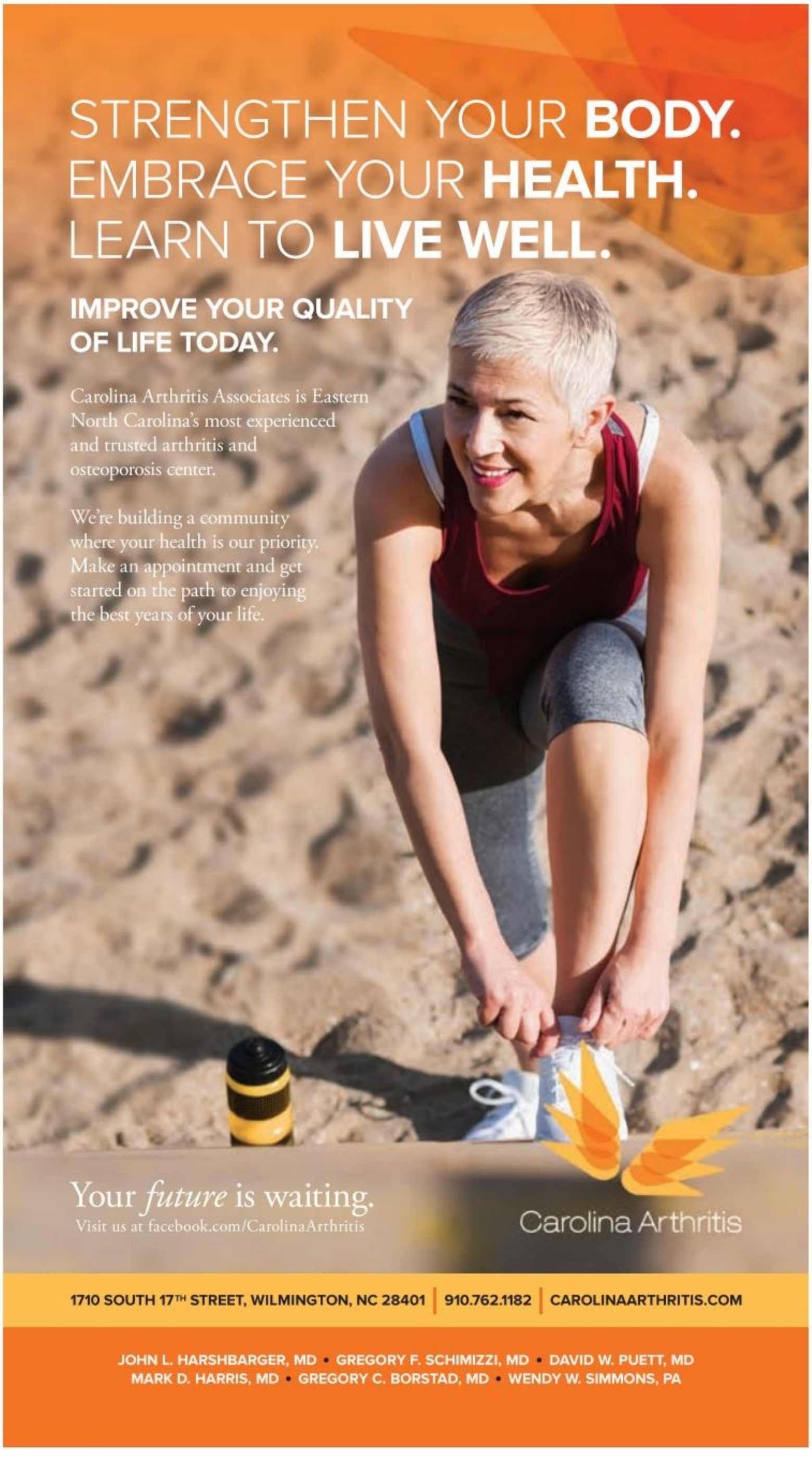
2135 Harborway Drive · Landfall · $1,049,000

Overlooking Landfall's scenic Nicklaus Ocean #2, this quality built all brick French Country inspired design features an open floor plan with 2 bedrooms on the first floor, including a spacious master. The upstairs floor plan can accommodate a family or offices for stay at home parents.

415 Marshland Drive · Landfall · $949,000

Enter the double-gated circular drive to this all brick Highland Ridge home built by Logan Homes. This nearly acre lot abuts Pembroke Jones Lake and offers over 4300 square feet. Some quality details include double front doors, arched doorways, floor to ceiling windows, built-ins, hardwood floors and a three car garage.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7000 West Creeks Edge Drive — *Cove Point*

This spacious home offers an open, flowing floor plan with a grand 2-story foyer, 10'ceilings throughout the first floor and wormy chestnut flooring. The chef's kitchen offers all top of the line stainless appliances, granite counters, custom cherry cabinetry, and 2 walk-in pantries. The first floor master suite includes a large bedroom, oversized custom designed closet/ dressing room, and a bath that is truly an amazing spa experience. The second floor is perfect for either a growing family or guest suites and office with an open playroom and a huge walk-in finished attic. The back yard is your own secluded oasis with pool, spa, terraced patios, and a professionally designed putting green surrounded by lush, mature palms. **$999,950**

8 Latimer Street — *Wrightsville Beach*

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Old No. 7

Two aging road warriors strike out in search of the American past

By Jim Dodson

As summer's end approached, I hit the road for research on a new book, though I wasn't sure how far I might get — or where I might end up.

The start of any book project brings with it a humbling sense of vertigo, a feeling that the road ahead will be challenging and possibly full of wrong turns and maddening dead ends. But this particular project held special meaning because it's a book I've been thinking about, in one form or another, for almost 40 years.

It's a book about a road.

But not just any road — the Great Wagon Road.

You may or may not have heard of it. But if you happen to be a Southerner with deep roots in the region, you may well be here because of it.

The Great Philadelphia Wagon Road, as it was called early on, became the most traveled road in Colonial America. It ran from Philadelphia to Augusta, Georgia, and was the road that opened the American South to exploration and settlement and pushed back the western frontier.

During the 18th and early 19th centuries, the road was the way to a new life for tens of thousands of Scots-Irish, German and English settlers — Amish, Moravians, Quakers and Presbyterians — who landed on our shores seeking a fresh start in a new world. Daniel Boone hunted along the road, and Thomas Jefferson's daddy named and surveyed it. A young captain named George Washington served as an Indian scout along the GWR and no less than three major wars, the French and Indian, American Revolution and Civil War — four if you care to count the Whiskey Rebellion — were fought along it's meandering way. Fittingly, the ingenious Conestoga wagon that carried later generations of settlers across the Great Plains to settle the Far West was created by German artisans by the Conestoga River near Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Both wings of my family came down the GWR in the mid-18th and early 19th centuries respectively. My pretty blond mama's sprawling German clan (the Kessells), hopped off around Hagerstown, Maryland and settled along the south branch of the Potomac River on the West Virginia side in the early 1800s. Half a century earlier, my daddy's Scottish and English forebears (the Tates and the Dodsons) filtered down the road over the Dan River through Walnut Cove before settling in the Hawfields near Mebane, where they formed churches and grist mills and made furniture. A few of them even went on down to Wilmington and the Cape Fear region.

I first heard about the Great Wagon Road four decades ago when a pretty girl named Rebecca Robinson and I stayed out all night on a date and wound up attending the sunrise service at God's Acre in Old Salem. The Moravians originated the service in 1732 in Saxony. While standing among the ancient gravestones of that famous Moravian — men separated from women, a democracy of death, as has been described — we struck up a conversation with an older gent who turned out to be a professor of history at nearby Salem College. When I happened to mention my family name, he smiled and commented that my forbears, like his, probably "came down the Great Wagon Road about the same time" in the late 1700s.

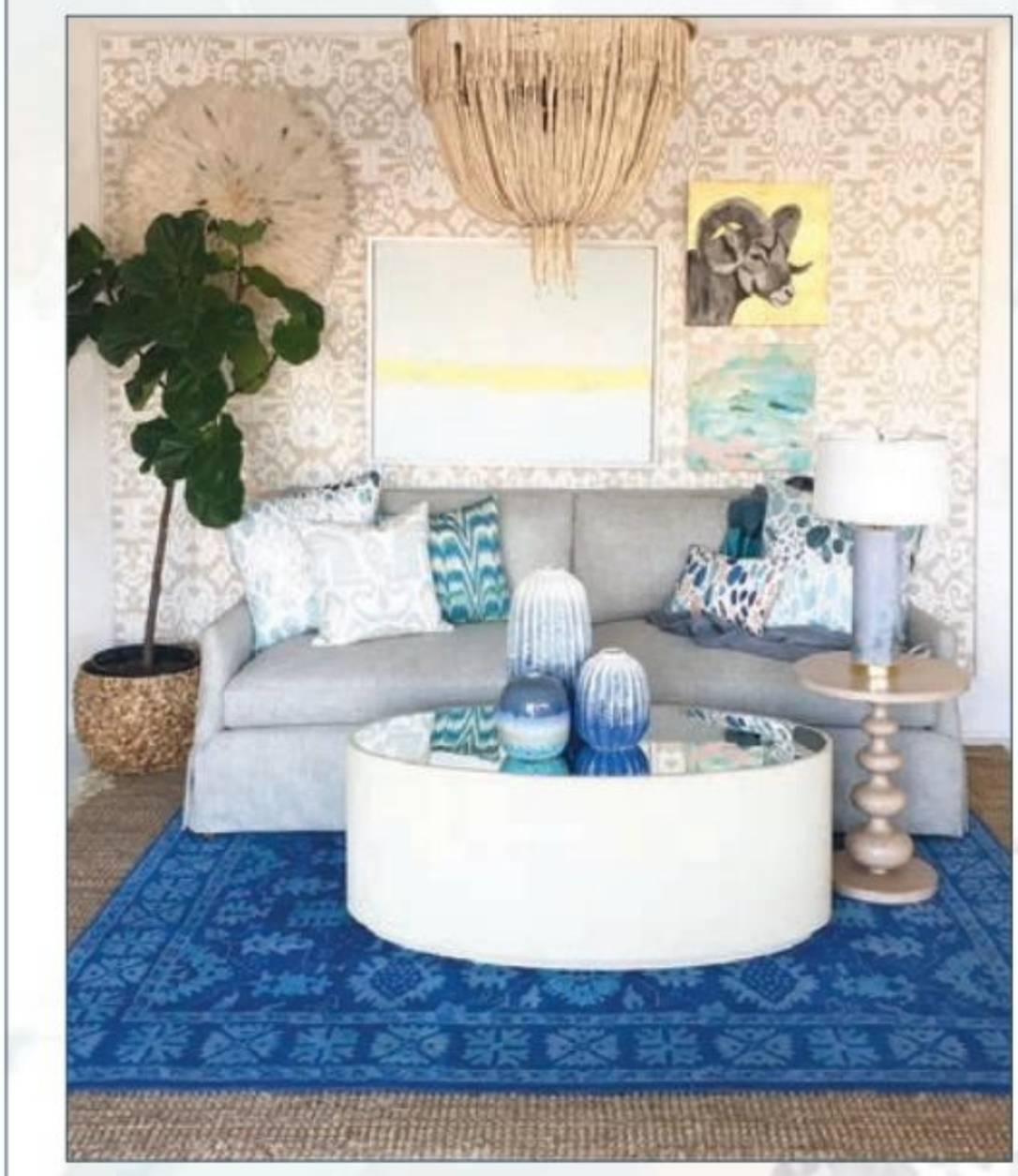
He explained that the GWR subsumed the remains of the so-called Great Indian Warrior Trading Path used by the Iroquois tribes such as the Cherokee, and other nations, including the Catawba and Tuscarora Indians until the Treaty of Lancaster in 1744 opened the western frontier to European settlement, pushing the native peoples farther into the mountains.

Cities such as Lancaster and York in Pennsylvania; Winchester, Roanoke and Lexington in Virginia; (Winston-)Salem, Salisbury, and Charlotte in North Carolina, and Camden in South Carolina, began either as trading post river fords or market towns that owe their origins directly to the Great Wagon Road.

Thirty-five years after that sunrise service, during the year I served as the Writer in Residence at Hollins University (which happened to lie along the GWR in a vale just north called "Big Lick," now Roanoke), my fascination with the road was powerfully rekindled. I began moseying along Virginia's winding and beautiful U.S. Route 11 and found all sorts of surviving references to the Great Wagon Road in various forms — place names of inns, family farms, townships, churches, battlefields and no shortage historical roadside standards.

On my trips home to Maine up Interstate 81, I realized that I was, in fact, traveling the same path my forebears had followed once upon a time in America, on the Great Wagon Road.

By the end of my time at Hollins, I'd resolved to someday drive the Great Wagon Road's 700 miles in order to investigate how a young nation was born and how my native South grew up along what may be the most historic road in the land.



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SIMPLE LIFE

Someday finally arrived when I loaded up my own Great Wagon and set off for Philadelphia just after dawn one morning in late July.

My Great Wagon happens to be a vintage 1996 Buick Roadmaster Estate wagon, an iconic American road car that automotive historians consider the last true production American station wagon built before Detroit switched to making SUVs.

Almost on a lark — or was it the sweet hand of Providence? — I bought it a decade ago from a nice lady in Pinehurst whose widowed papa had recently given up driving and had to "let go of his baby."

Well-maintained Roadmasters, I soon learned, can fetch a tidy sum and are greatly in demand among collectors of vintage automobiles.

This one turned out to be a gem.

Its odometer had only 59,000 miles on it. The lovely fellow who'd owned it actually kept velvet on the dash. The seats were comfy and roomy, like leather La-Z-Boy recliners. It's famous Dynaride suspension system made the vehicle glide over the road like a dream, and a 350-horsepower V-8 engine was the same one Chevy put in its Corvettes. The air conditioning system could have cooled a deli meat locker and the killer cassette audio system had the acoustics of a concert hall.

True, there were a few tiny dents and peeling paint in its fake wood grain side panels — but hey, there were in mine, too. We were perfect for each other.

I bought the car an hour after driving it.

Our four kids were amused and maybe a little embarrassed when they laid eyes on my newly acquired land yacht that Christmas.

"It's so, well . . . big," said one son with a wary chuckle.

You should give it a nickname," suggested another, the family comedian. "How about The Beast?"

I didn't care for The Beast. The car was nothing if not an iconic work of American automotive art, an aged beauty whose name said it all — Master of the Road.

One ride in it, however, and they all changed their tunes. Three of the four asked to take the car to college. Not on your life, I said, though I did consent to let them drive it whenever they were in residence.

My work colleagues were also amused.

The publisher of this magazine suggested I call her the "Dirty Pearl," as if my beloved land yacht were an old pirate ship.

That nickname was cute but never seemed quite right to me.

While researching the Roadmaster's distinguished automotive history — it's the car that basically helped Buick survive the Great Depression

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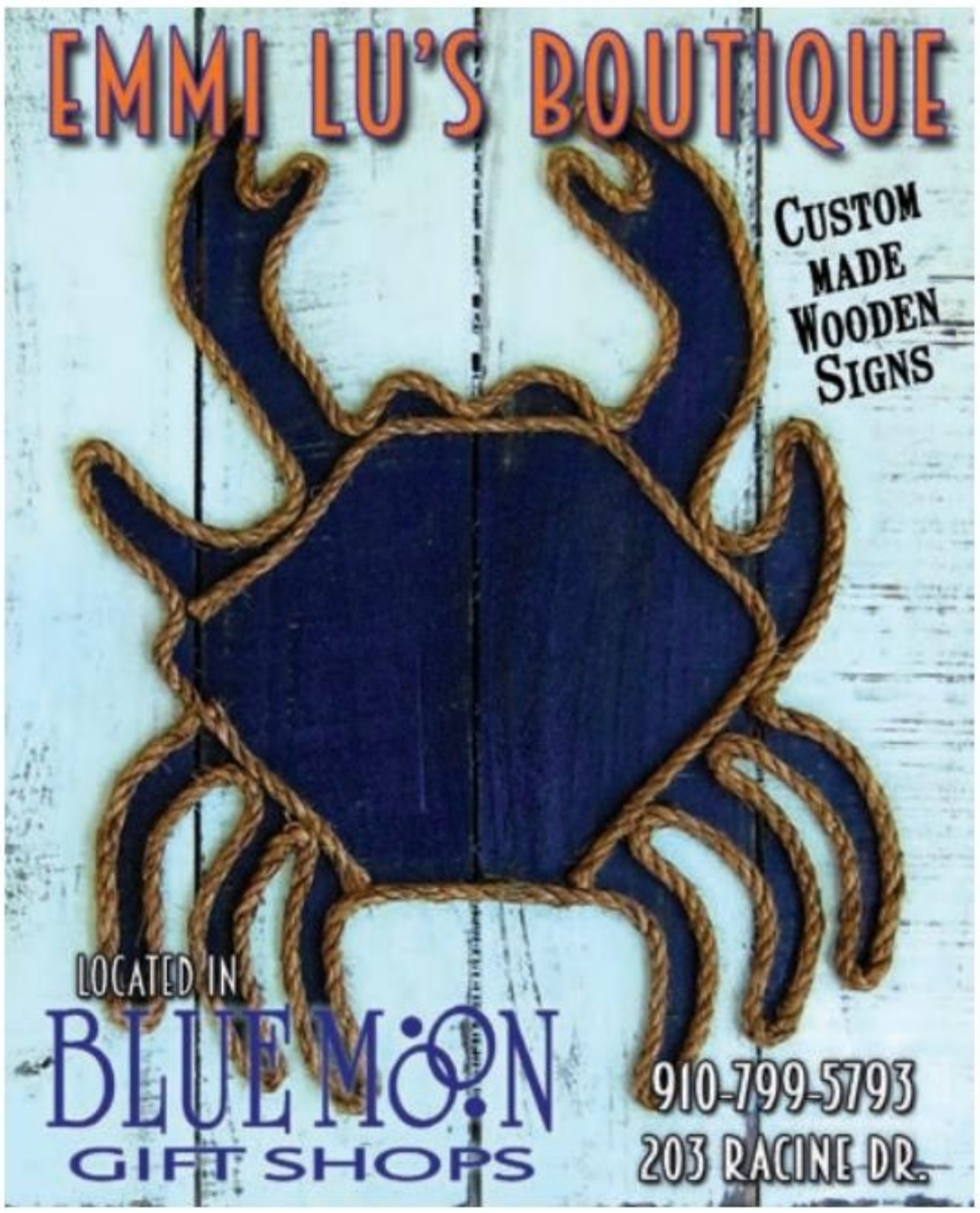
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and became the symbol of 1950s suburban America — I discovered a website that listed the Roadmaster Estate wagon among "Top Ten Best Vehicles for the End of the World," capable of handling "nuclear winter, economic collapse or a zombie takeover."

My 1996 Roadmaster was No. 7 on the list. The photograph was even identical to my Great Wagon — "The Modern American Power Wagon Exemplar," noted the editor of *Popular Mechanics*, in effect the Conestoga Wagon of Vacationing America.

I finally had the perfect nickname.

My Great Wagon, after all, had survived the lives of two large and rambunctious American families, three teen drivers and decades of moving everything from entire households to countless garden shrubs, not to mention made dozens of beach trips and backcountry camping expeditions with a large canoe lashed on her roof. My Great Wagon was nothing if not a proven survivor.

So this summer, after 21 years of life and 159,000 miles, following a tune-up from Clark the mechanic who has faithfully looked after the old gal for years, we set off together up the Great Wagon Road to begin the first leg of our long journey from Market Square in Colonial Philadelphia to Augusta, Georgia.

Old No. 7 handled Philly's congested tourist traffic like a summer breeze off the Delaware and cruised west on the Lincoln Highway as if she were right off of the showroom floor.

After Philadelphia, where I walked in the footsteps of our founders and boned up on my heroes Jefferson and Franklin, the Old No. 7 led me to an expert on Colonial furniture making and allowed me to dine with a historian of Amish life. Among other things, I dropped by America's oldest farmer's market (1745), explored four famous battlefields, hiked in a state park, visited the nation's first commercial pretzel maker, learned about the birth of the Conestoga wagon and watched the sun rise on Cemetery Hill where Lincoln gave his deeply moving Gettsyburg Address on a November afternoon in 1863. My notebook runneth over.

After five days out, we came home to rest a bit before resuming the next leg of the long road from Winchester to Old Salem later this autumn. The Road's original travelers sometimes took four or five months to reach their new homes in the Southern Wilderness. Old No. 7 and I hoped to finish our travels in about the same amount of time.

According to her odometer, we covered 179 miles of the Great Wagon Road, which by my reckoning means there are many more miles of great discoveries to come.

Contact Editor Jim Dodson at jim@thepilot.com.

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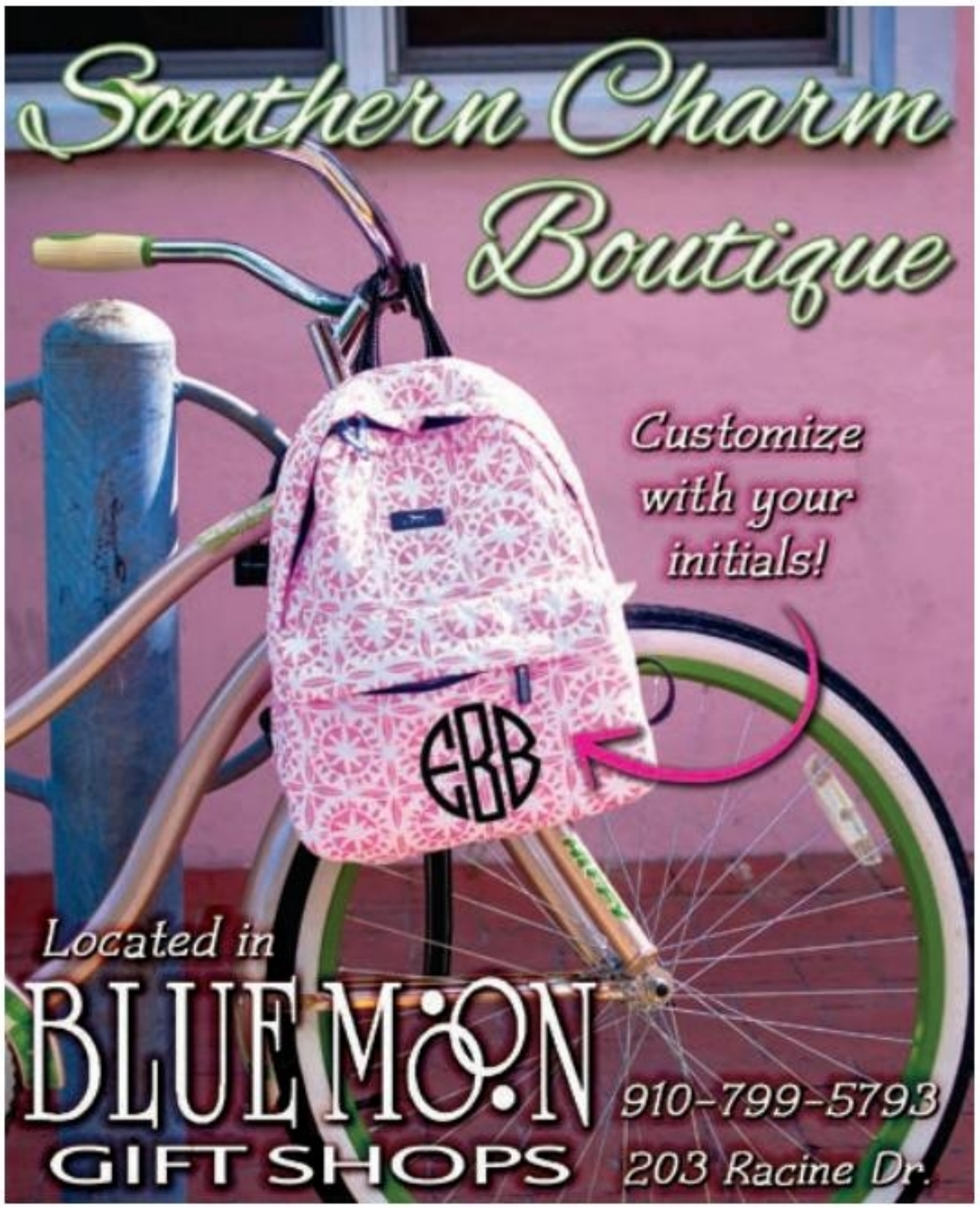
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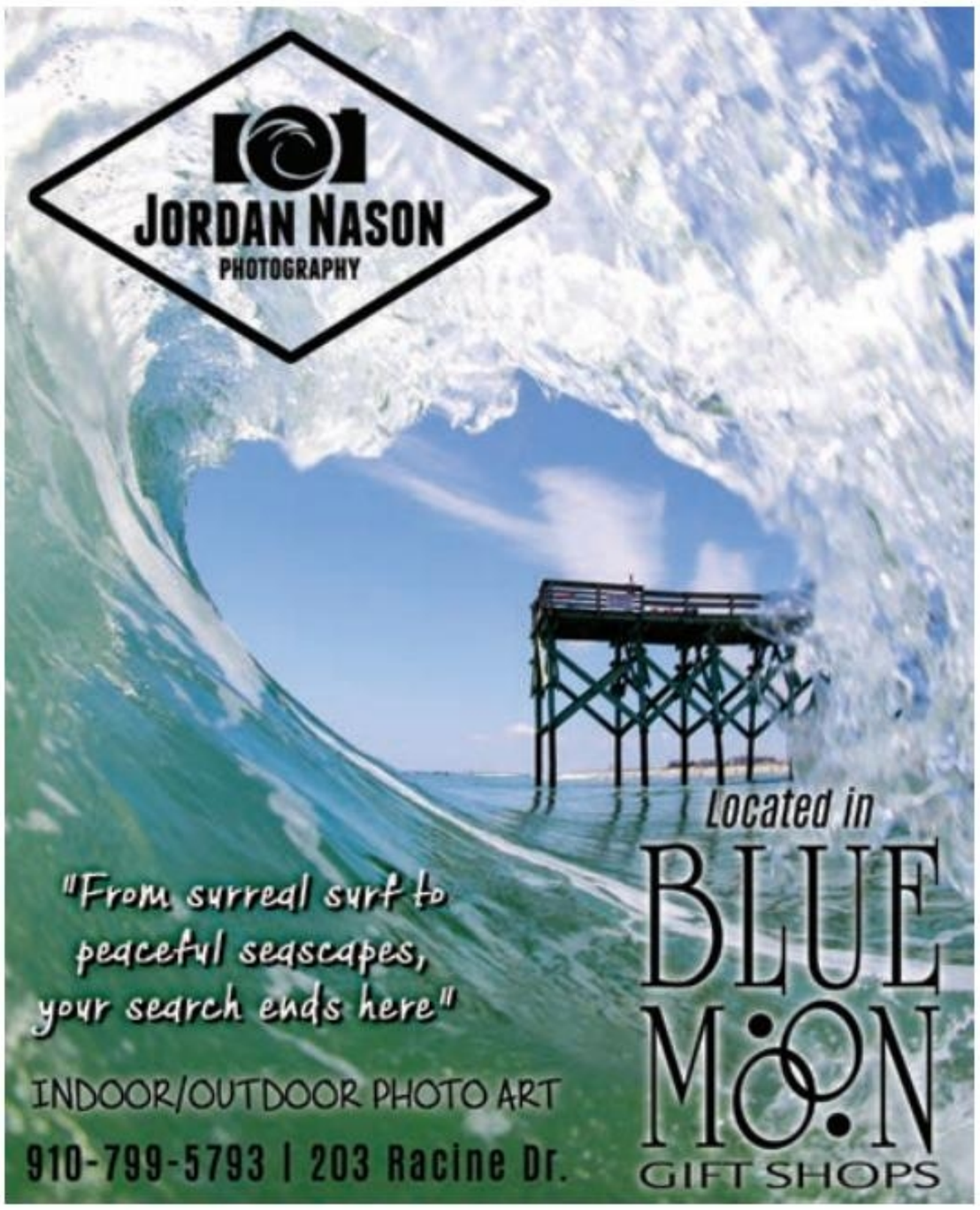
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Rock On for Cancer

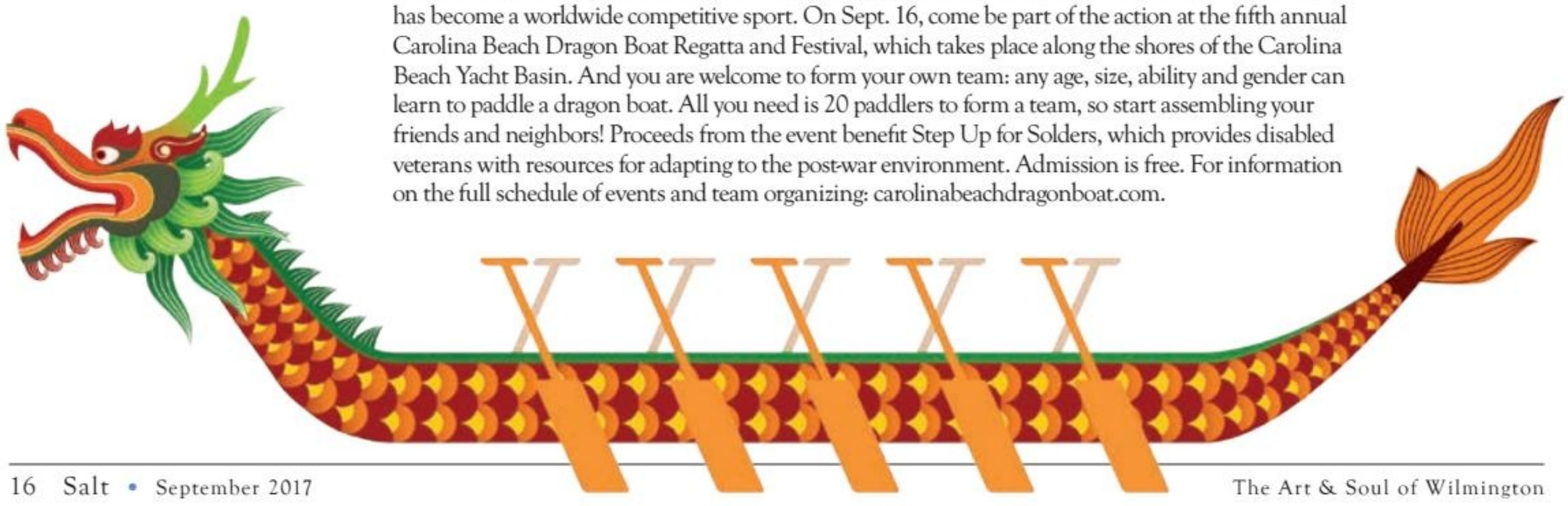
September is Ovarian Cancer Month, and She ROCKS, a local nonprofit devoted to funding research for ovarian cancer, will hold its fourth annual fundraiser luncheon on Sept. 12 at 11:30 a.m. Since its inception in 2014, the organization has raised more than $500,000 for ovarian cancer research and support programs for those undergoing chemotherapy. This year's lunch speaker is Shannon Miller, a cancer survivor and the most decorated Olympic gymnast in American history. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt St. Tickets and information: (910) 620-3953 or info@she-rocks.org.

Arts at the Beach

Calling all creatives: The New Coastal Retreats and Workshops will host an inspiring lineup of classes and programs at the Landis-Smith beach house in Wrightsville Beach. Among the offerings: gentle stand-up paddle boarding with Amanda Jacobs on the Intracoastal Waterway; a vintage Indonesian textile stamp printing workshop; creating succulent garden terrariums with Kim Fisher; and for a respite from all the craftiness, a coastal charcuterie and cocktails workshop. $50-75 per program. Various packages available. Sept. 14-16. For more information: thenewcoastalretreats.com.

China Meets Carolina

Dragon boat racing has been a part of Chinese culture for more than 2,500 years. In modern times it has become a worldwide competitive sport. On Sept. 16, come be part of the action at the fifth annual Carolina Beach Dragon Boat Regatta and Festival, which takes place along the shores of the Carolina Beach Yacht Basin. And you are welcome to form your own team: any age, size, ability and gender can learn to paddle a dragon boat. All you need is 20 paddlers to form a team, so start assembling your friends and neighbors! Proceeds from the event benefit Step Up for Solders, which provides disabled veterans with resources for adapting to the post-war environment. Admission is free. For information on the full schedule of events and team organizing: carolinabeachdragonboat.com.



Drugs, Uncovered

The opioid epidemic has reached crisis proportions in eastern North Carolina (and is still the big elephant in the room). Thankfully, two important nonprofit groups are making efforts to broaden the public conversation in Wilmington about addiction. The Poe Center of Raleigh is a nonprofit organization dedicated to health education of North Carolina's children and families; the Tri-County Community Collaborative, a volunteer organization, shares a similar mission in Brunswick, New Hanover and Pender counties. On Sept. 23 they will present "Drugs Uncovered: What Parents & Other Adults Need to Know," an informative program that will include a tour of a mock teenage bedroom for attendants to learn telltale evidence of substance abuse. The event is open to adults 18 and older. 3 to 5 p.m.

Admission is free but registration is limited. To reserve a place, go to nctricountysoc.org and click on the link for Poe Center Drug Prevention Program for Adults and click RSVP Now. McNeill Hall, UNC Wilmington, 5010 Cahill Drive, Wilmington.

Low Country Fun

The Wrightsville Beach office of the North Carolina Coastal Federation presents a Low Country Boil & Brew on Sept. 24 from 4 to 7 p.m. This annual benefit, which supports the federation's clean water projects, will feature fresh local seafood, live music, and the raffle of a paddle board donated by the Carolina Paddle Board Company. Tickets are $25 for members, $30 for nonmembers. Wrightsville Beach Brewery, 6201 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. For more information: nccoast.org.

Rhythm Old and New

Formal Motion Dance Company of Wilmington presents "Retro Fusion and Illusion," a collaborative dance event that will feature new dance works as well as a piece by guest choreographer Linda Webb that is set to a remix of Elvis Presley's "Blue Suede Shoes." Other dance pieces feature the music of Nat King Cole, David Bowie and Earth Wind & Fire, among others. And there will be a dance performed to new music by Herb Alpert featuring teen dancers from DREAMS, the Dance Cooperative. Sept. 15-16 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are $20. Thalian Hall Center for the Performing Arts, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. For more information and reservations: (910) 632-2285.

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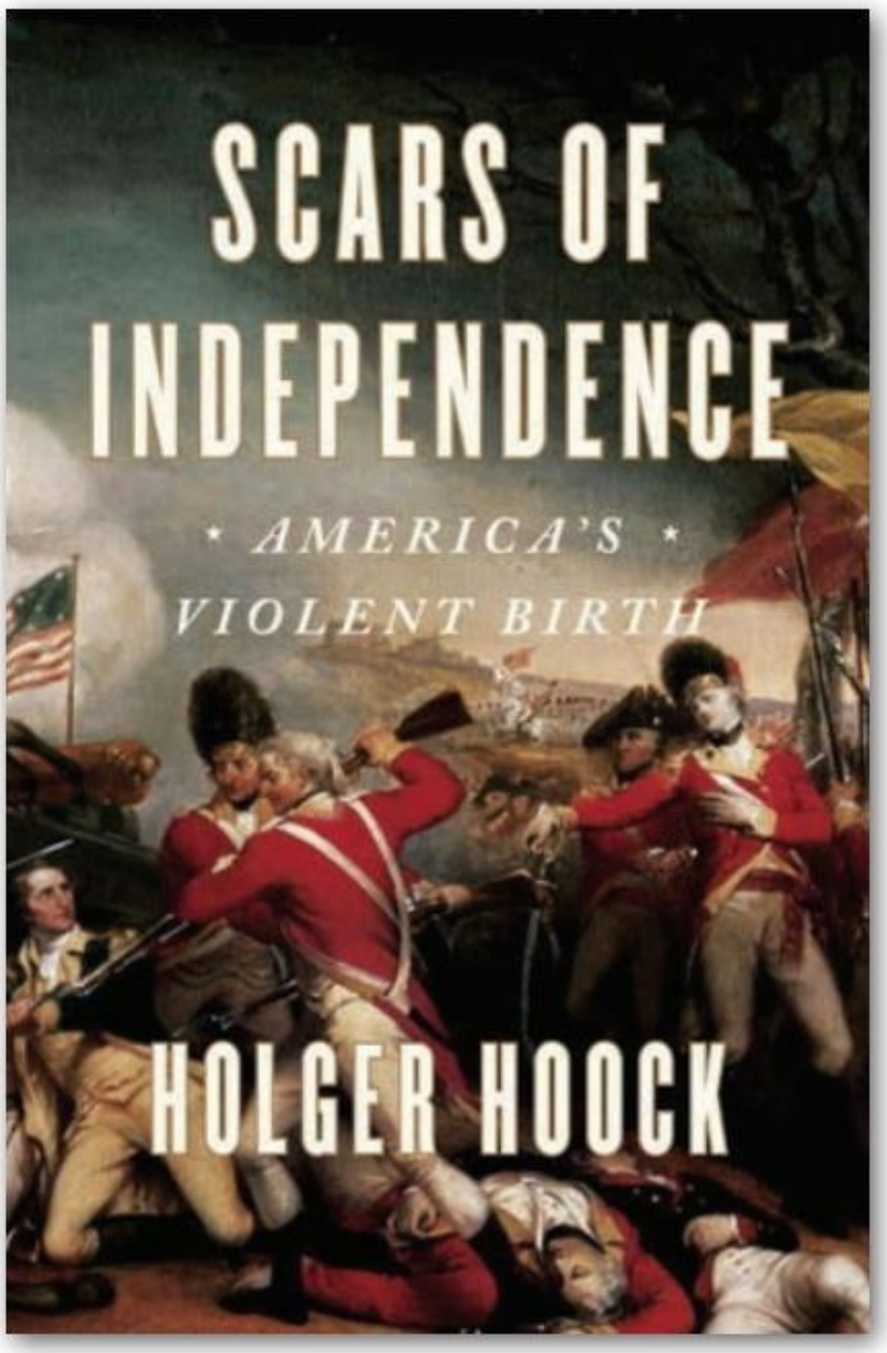
Revolutionary Scars

A revealing look at the cost of civil strife



By Stephen E. Smith

They're called "uncle books," popular histories you gift to your Uncle Leo so he can kick back in his easy chair and read about political and military luminaries such as Washington, Adams, Jefferson and Hamilton. These lengthy narrative histories, which are generally revisionist in intent and convey idealized portraits of their subjects, have done much to shape our beliefs about the founding of the Republic. What they haven't done is examine the plight of ordinary Patriots, Loyalists, British and Continental soldiers, African-Americans, Native Americans and German auxiliaries, the brave, long-suffering souls who did most of the fighting and dying during the Revolutionary War.

In *Scars of Independence: America's Violent Birth,* Holger Hoock attempts to set the record straight by revealing the brutality of our first civil war, and describing in graphic detail the torments endured by ordinary soldiers and innocent noncombatants on both sides of the Revolution. Hoock writes: "For two centuries this topic has been subject to whitewashing and selective remembering and forgetting. While contemporaries experienced the Revolution as frightening, messy, and divisive, its pervasive violence and terror have since yielded to romanticized notions of the nation's birth."

Hoock supports this thesis with statistics that suggest there was suffering aplenty. Per capita, 10 times as many Americans died in the Revolutionary War as in World War I and five times as many as died in World War II. Among prisoners of war, the death rate was the highest in American history. Between 16,000 to 19,000 Continentals died while confined by the British. And Hoock argues convincingly that Loyalist noncombatants routinely suffered imprisonment and torture at the hands of Patriots.

Hoock offers as an example the experience of Edward Huntington, who was convicted of being a traitor to the Patriot cause and was sentenced to spend "the rest of his life sixty to eighty feet underground in a dark, damp, claustrophobic tomb." Huntington was transported to an infamous copper mine in Simsbury, Connecticut, and was lowered deep into a dismal cavern where he could not stand upright. He shared his incarceration with "violent criminals serving sentences from one year to life for horse thievery, aggravated burglary, highway robbery, sexual assault, and accessory to murder." The subterranean chambers had no natural light, limited air circulation, constant dampness and employed a communal tub as a toilet, a breeding ground for "fevers, influenza, respiratory problems, dysentery and typhoid."

Patriots employed arson, rape, confiscation and public shaming against their Loyalist neighbors, but tarring and feathering was the preferred punishment. The case of John Malcom, a Boston customs official, is cited as typical. After having hot tar and feathers applied to his naked body, Malcom spent two months in bedridden agony before fleeing to England, where he petitioned Parliament for monetary redress by sending pieces of his skin as proof of his loyalty. When such punishments failed to satisfy Patriot vengeance, many Loyalists were "killed by mobs or at the hands of marauding bands, hanged by order of councils of safety or assemblies of various states, or executed following court-martial."

Hoock gives British atrocities, including Banastre Tarleton's dishonorable conduct at Waxhaw, passing mention, but his primary focus is on lesser known campaigns, such as Washington's genocidal response to Iroquois raids in the Wyoming Valley of Pennsylvania. Washington's objective in punishing the Six Nations was "the total destruction and devastation of their settlements

and the capture of as many prisoners of every age and sex as possible." To that end, the Continental Army destroyed 45 towns and all of the Native Americans' crops and food stores, plunging the tribes into starvation. Iroquois retaliated by torturing and mutilating Continental soldiers. Patriot Lt. Thomas Hubley recorded the barbarity in his diary that "their heads Cut off, and the flesh of Lt. Boyds head was intirely taken of and his eyes punched out. . . his fingers and Toe nails was bruised of, and the Dog had eat part of the Shoulders away likewise a knife Sticking in Lt. Boyds body."

The fate of African-American combatants is, as one might expect, particularly disturbing. In most cases, slaves were promised their freedom by the government for which they fought, but their treatment was at best exploitive and their well-being of little concern to those who tendered assurances. Many slaves who served the Revolutionary cause found that promises weren't kept, and the British treated African-American soldiers as disposable laborers, abandoning thousands to die of disease, before transporting the survivors to Nova Scotia, or Jamaica and other West Indian islands.

The bitterness occasioned by the Revolution lingered long after Cornwallis had surrendered at Yorktown, and acts of vengeance and retaliation took the form of physical violence and executions. Hoock recounts the 1782 hanging of Joshua Huddy, commander of a New Jersey Patriot militia, and the Patriots' retaliation — known as the "The Asgill Affair" — in which Gen. Washington ordered that a British officer, Capt.Charles Asgill, be executed. Eventually, Asgill was released, but a generation of brutal warfare had habituated Americans to a thirst for revenge that no treaty could assuage.

Although *Scars of Independence* isn't a pleasant read, it makes a significant contribution to our knowledge of the Revolution, and it's another reminder that brutality is the norm in war, especially in civil wars. The question for readers is this: Are we obligated to acknowledge the abominations committed by our forefathers? As Maxim Gorky, a man who knew something of the horrors occasioned by civil strife, wrote: "I have no desire to make anyone miserable, but one must not be sentimental, nor hide the grim truth with the motley words of beautiful lies. Let us face life as it is. All that is good and human in our hearts needs renewing."

Stephen E. Smith is a retired professor and the author of seven books of poetry and prose. He's the recipient of the Poetry Northwest Young Poet's Prize, the Zoe Kincaid Brockman Prize for poetry and four North Carolina Press awards.

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1 Tbsp. baking powder
1 tsp. salt
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2/3 cup milk
grated cheese (optional)

DIRECTIONS:
Combine flour, baking powder and salt. Cut in shortening and add milk. Turn dough out onto floured surface. Roll dough into 18□ x 12□ rectangle. Spread uncooked sausage over dough. Spread grated cheese on top of sausage. Roll dough into jelly-roll fashion starting with the longest side. Cover and refrigerate one hour. Slice dough into 1/4 inch slices. Back at 350 degrees for 20 minutes. Makes 3 1/2 dozen.

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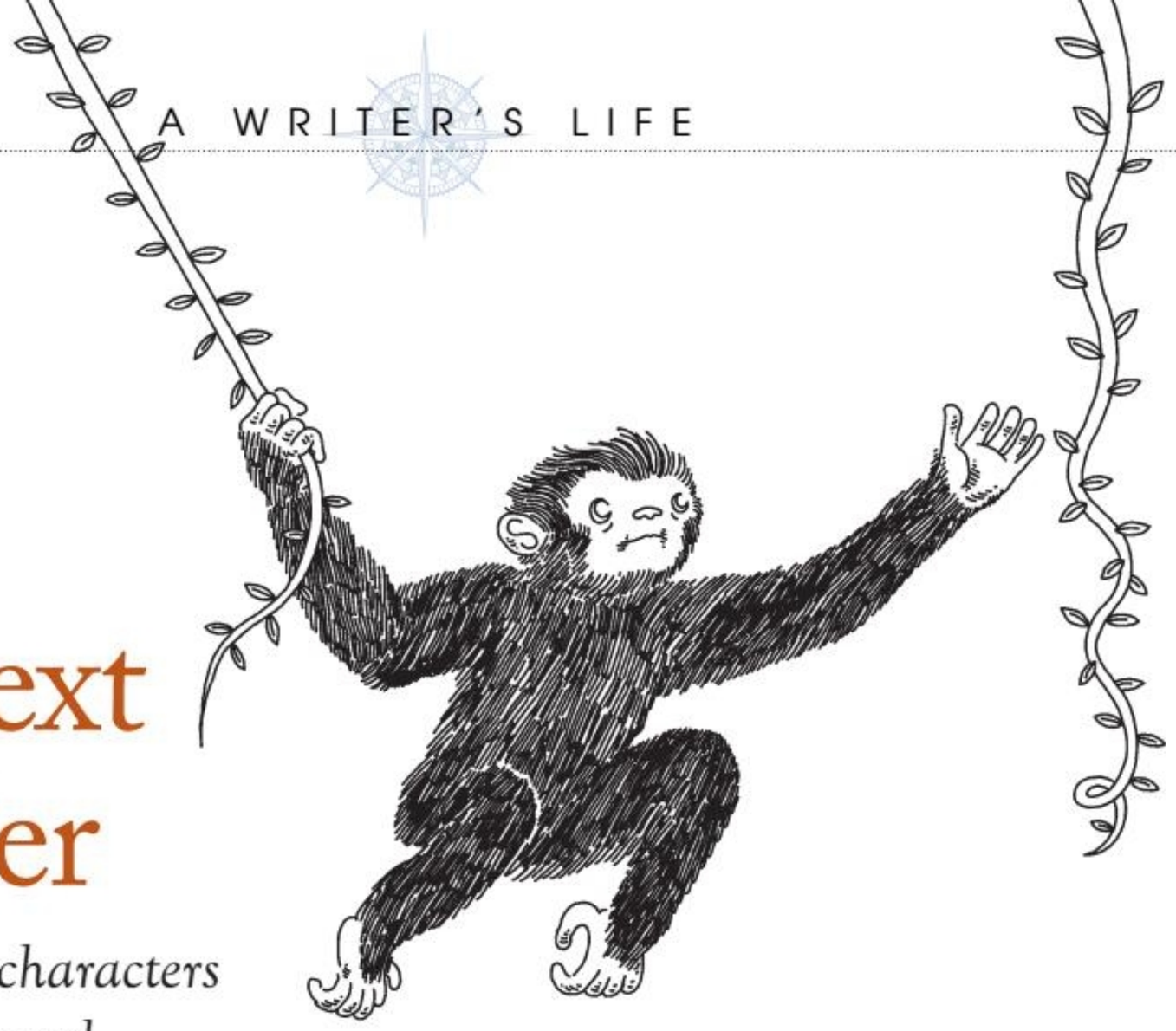

The Next Frontier

Listening for voices of characters I have not yet created

By Wiley Cash

Jill McCorkle, my friend and fellow writer, has said on more than one occasion that she knows it is time to let go of one novel when the next one reveals itself. I imagine this is like swinging through the jungle on vines: It's not wise to let go of one vine until you're certain that another is in reach. I feel the same way; even if my eyes are closed as I reach for the vine, I'm certain it's there, waiting for me if I'm brave enough to grasp it and keep swinging along.

But I cannot help but pause and hover in mid-air. I need to give my hands a rest before they grasp another project, before my body can agree to be carried through the jungle of novel-writing with only the most tenuous connections to the trees above me to keep me from tumbling to the forest floor.

For me, writing a novel is hard, and it takes a long time, and over the course of writing three novels I have adjusted my approach to letting one go before taking up another.

I began writing my first novel, *A Land More Kind Than Home*, which is about the fallout in the community after a young boy is smothered during a healing service in the mountains of North Carolina, in the spring of 2004, and I thought I had finished it in the fall of 2008 when a New York agent agreed to represent it, but I was wrong. Although she and I worked on revisions of the novel over the next year and a half, she was never able to sell it to a publisher, and we ended up parting ways in early 2010. I had a failed novel on my hands, and I had lost an agent. The chance to publish had slipped through my fingers.

Although I felt defeated, I had already begun thinking about writing a second novel, although I had no idea how to begin. I had lived with the story of my first novel for five years, and I knew the characters intimately — their history, landscape and emotional terrain — and I could not imagine forgoing these people for a new cast of individuals that would be born in my mind and live on my screen for some indeterminate time.

Slowly, characters for a new novel and the circumstances that would animate them began to come to me: two young sisters in foster care; a wayward father who is also a washed-up baseball player; stolen money; a bounty hunter with a years' old vendetta. Although the characters and plot were revealing themselves, I was hesitant to put pen to paper until I knew for certain that my first novel had failed. I'm glad I waited.

In the spring of 2010 I began working with a new agent. Over the course of the next few months, he and I worked on revisions of *A Land More Kind Than Home*. In late October, he called me and told me that the book was ready to go out to editors in the hope one of them would want to publish it. He asked if I had another novel in mind. He wanted us to go for a two-book deal. I told him the story of a washed-up minor league baseball player who kidnaps his two daughters from a foster home and goes on the run with a bag of stolen money. I had not written a word of the novel yet, but I had lived with it for the better part of a year.

My agent sold the manuscript of *A Land More Kind Than Home*, as well as a synopsis of what would become *This Dark Road to Mercy*, to the first editor who read it. I suddenly found myself with a two-book deal.

Over the next few months, my new editor and I went back to *A Land More Kind Than Home*, and I wrote a new draft of the novel, and I also spent a lot of time on pre-publication tasks: writing essays that would appear online and in magazines; giving interviews; attending trade shows; and traveling to New York to meet the publishing team. Although the synopsis of *This Dark Road to Mercy* sold in late 2010, I did not write a word of the novel until the summer of 2011.

ILLUSTRATION BY ROMEY PETITE

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I was very fortunate to be accepted to artists' retreats at Yaddo in Saratoga Springs, New York, and, later that summer, at MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire. The first time I sat down to write at Yaddo in June 2011, I wrote the entire first chapter of *This Dark Road to Mercy*. It literally poured itself onto the page because I had been living with it in my mind for so long. By the end of the summer I almost had a complete draft.

My first novel, *A Land More Kind Than Home*, was published in April 2012, and I submitted the final manuscript of *This Dark Road to Mercy* to my editor a year later. One day, he and I were on the phone talking about the novel and the ways in which it would be promoted and sold.

He said, "I know you just turned in the manuscript, but I'm wondering if you've got any ideas about a new novel."

I did. For a few years I'd been considering writing about the Loray Mill and the violent textile strike that engulfed my hometown of Gastonia, North Carolina, in the summer of 1929. I told my editor that, in secret, I had begun working on a novel based on the life and tragic murder of Ella May Wiggins, a young single mother who joined the union only to be killed after becoming the face of the strike. He said the story sounded interesting. We got off the phone, and I did not think anything more about our conversation until later that afternoon, when my agent called. My editor had just offered us another two-book deal.

For the past five years I have been clinging to the vine that is now titled *The Last Ballad*, living in a 1929 world of cotton mill shacks, country clubs, segregated railroad cars, and labor organizers with communist sympathies. Everything I know about the craft of writing and the history, culture and politics of America, especially the American South, has gone into this novel. I literally feel as if I have been wrung dry, and I cannot imagine writing another book, even though I know I will sooner than later.

But even in this state of exhaustion, there is a story percolating in my brain where the voices of characters I have not yet created are speaking in whispers. I feel the hot breath of a novel on my neck even as I sit here. There is a vine somewhere out there in the jungle, if only I'll reach out, open my hand, and grasp it.

It's not going anywhere. I'm not either.

Wiley Cash lives in Wilmington with his wife and their two daughters. His forthcoming novel The Last Ballad *is available for pre-order wherever books are sold.*

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Blues Man

Chicago transplant Jon McDonalds's link to the titans of Jazz

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW SHERMAN

By John Wolfe

"The blues is a rusty nail," the great singer Etta James once said. What exactly she meant by that, I'm not sure, but I can tell you where to start looking. There's a bar of the same name down by the train tracks on South Fifth, near Greenfield, and on Tuesday nights they host an open-mic jam, run by the Cape Fear Blues Society. A good place to start asking might be out back on the smoke-wreathed patio, where the musicians shoot the breeze between sets. Or maybe up by the pool table at the entrance, the clacks of cues striking intermingling with the upbeat crack of the snare. More than likely you'll find answers at one of the tables in front of the stage: There are people here from all races and backgrounds and social situations, people at varying degrees of economic security and mental health. This is a place where everyone becomes the same shadow-draped figure watching the dazzling lights and the musicians sweating to create the sound which fills the low-ceilinged room.

They're playing the blues — classic, timeless, yet still relevant; a uniquely American form of music that inspired almost everything that came after it. Your standard blues song has four measures of the root note, two of the fourth, two of the root again. The real exciting part: a measure of the fifth, where the music reaches up to heaven, then one of the fourth again, falling from grace, then back to the root again for the last two, back to Earth, back to where it all started, down low. But at the very end of the phrase, a sting, a beat of the fifth again, to remind us what this music can do. Twelve bars in all. So simple anyone can play it, but complicated enough that only a handful can play it well.

At eight o'clock the musicians start to shuffle in, lugging their instruments down the room's left side to an alcove beside the stage, where a whiteboard hangs, conspicuously, on the wall. The board is divided into a grid; on the horizontal axis, the sets of three songs (or 20 minutes, whichever comes first). The vertical column is split into instruments: lead and rhythm guitar, vocals, bass, drums, harmonica, keys, brass. The musicians make their marks at the intersections. Chatting, casual, they hang a bit, drinking their beers, but one eye always watches the board to see who's playing when, or if a new set will open up before the jam master decides it's getting late and he needs to get home to his wife. They never know who they're going to play with until they take the stage. Anyone could walk through that door and sign his or her name. The creation all happens in the moment, extemporaneously, which leaves it both vulnerable to colossal flop, or capable of actual magic; sorcery, even, when the right group of shamans walks up there.

One such magic player is guitarist Jon McDonald. He's a fairly recent Wilmington transplant, from the Windy City originally — as was said of Luther Allison, "You can take the bluesman out of Chicago, but you can't take Chicago out of the bluesman." Jon grew up there, on the south and west side of town, until his parents separated when he was 8. Then he lived with his mother, on the 19th floor of a north-side housing project in Al Capone's old neighborhood, with windows from which he could peer down at his city — something he says gave him a different perspective. There was a lot going on outside that window. It was poverty, he says, but he was meant to be there. Lots of musicians lived in that neighborhood — a good place for a young boy who got his first guitar at age 12 (his parents originally gave him a cello to keep him from getting in trouble in school. It didn't work).

Growing up there and watching great musicians on Wells Street, near where

he went to Catholic school at St. Michael's, eventually led him to getting up on stage. "I had a way of putting myself into, finding different situations," Jon says, sitting next to me on a barstool, watching the world. "It was more fun to be close to the action musically than it was to be in the audience." (Interesting side note: There's a photograph of him standing behind Allen Ginsberg onstage at the '68 Democratic National Convention.) He saw artists who influenced him — to name just a few, Rory Gallagher, Jon Rindborn, Major Lance and Hubert Sumlin — many of whom he played with later in life.

This makes Jon part of the direct lineage of blues musicians that can be traced way back to the very beginning. He's one degree away from Chicago blues titans like Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf, but the music goes back to the Mississippi Delta with players like Robert Johnson and Son House; back, back, all the way back to the slaves crossing to the Caribbean from Africa on the middle passage, unwilling passengers who communicated clandestinely through beats tapped out into their captor ship's bulkheads. That's where the blues began, says Jon. With the beat. "The beat — just the sound of it, you actually feel the word as well as hear it: beat," says Jon. "And it's the same thing with the blues: blues. It's not always what you hear. It's what you feel." I say the words out loud, reaching for that feeling. Beat. Blues. And I do start to feel something: down low, in my chest, in my heart. "That seems to be a lost essence, as well as (a lost) art," Jon says. "Without that feeling, you got nothing."

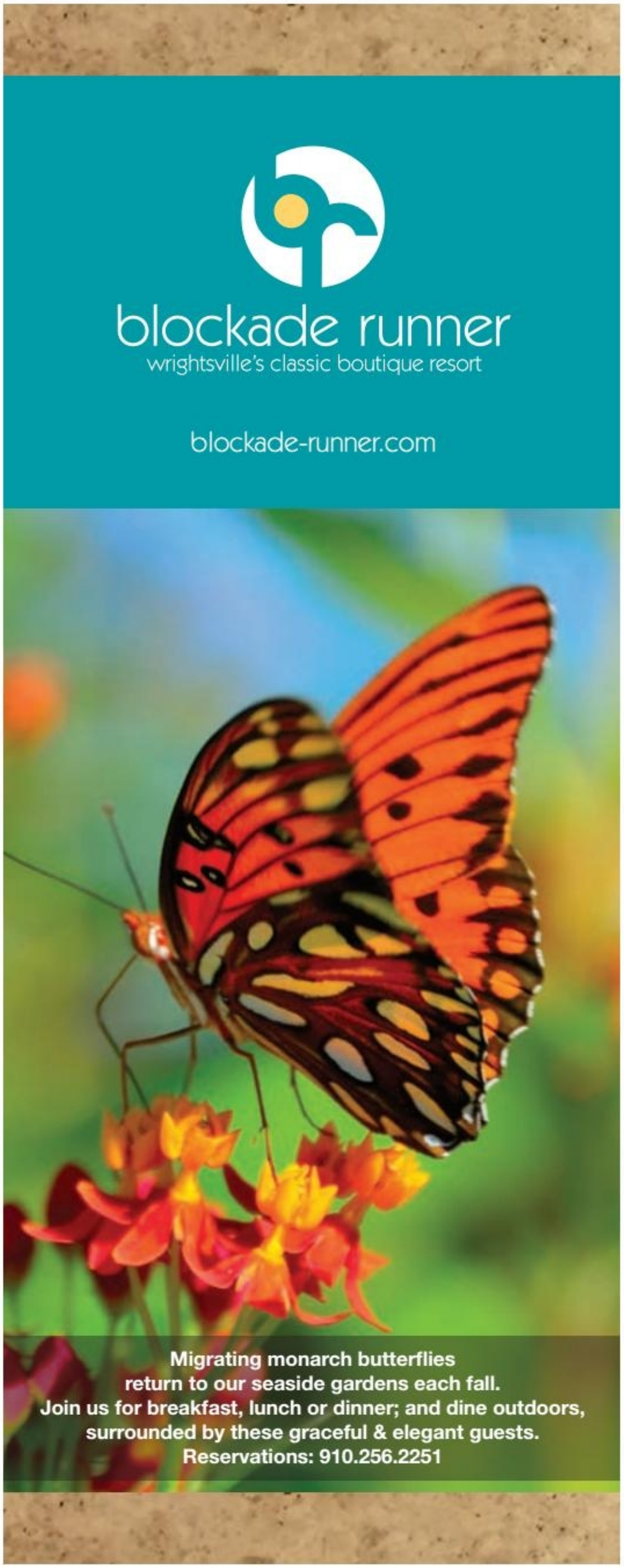
The man who was the connection between Jon and Muddy Waters is an accomplished blues guitarist named Morris "Magic Slim" Holt, who had enough of that feeling to go around many times over, and he wasn't shy about sharing it. Slim's obituary in *Rolling Stone* magazine credited him with "help(ing) define the sound of post-war electric blues in Chicago." Jon played with Slim for 13 years as the rhythm guitarist for Slim's band, the Teardrops, recorded six albums, and toured with him extensively, playing gigs in the Netherlands and throughout Europe, Brazil, Asia, Canada, Mexico and nearly every state in America. Jon calls him his "Dutch Uncle," and says Slim treated him like "a little brother."

When Slim played guitar, he played without moving his hand up and down the fretboard, staying in one spot, but finding everything that was there. His style wasn't about technical proficiency, or trying to cram as many notes as possible into a solo. It was about pulling people into his own experience with his music. Most of all, Jon says, a bluesman has to connect with his audience. "Slim was really great because he could play one note — and that was the point. In that one note, he was really expressive."

The other thing Slim taught him, Jon says, was to stop trying to sound like Magic Slim. Take the music, make it your own. Do your own thing; tell your own story. The blues, first and foremost, has always been about the story, the history, of the person singing the song. When Jon steps onto the stage and picks up his guitar and plays, you hear a man who has spent a lifetime refining his voice. He sings in a smoky, booming baritone, textured as granite; when he lays down notes, they are bricks in the house he is building, the solid structure he then paints with wild wails of pure expression. Jon is a craftsman — a master. All his notes are as big as his personality, his presence — he picks up the guitar like it's a lost part of himself, and there he is, suddenly, drawing you in with the kind of natural gravity all great players have.

There are people on stage at the Rusty Nail for whom this is their Tuesday night, and there are people on the stage for whom this is their entire life. Amateurs with shiny strings on their guitars get the chance to trade notes with pros who have played on stages much bigger than this one, across the country and the world. But everyone comes together to speak a common language, united against the shared sorrows of human existence, of life's basic tragedy, and still find joy in those in-between moments which are magic, plain and simple.

John Wolfe studied creative nonfiction at UNCW. When he's not in the water, he wishes he were.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Wednesday, September 6th, 2017 at 2:00 PM

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RSVP by Tuesday, September 5th

"Laughing Gull Indian Site": Part I of The Intriguing Cultures Series

Session 3: *Lyrical; Dance and Emotion*

Presented by: Clara Hodges, Brightmore Resident/Archaeology Researcher

Monday, September 18th, 2017 at 2:00 PM

In 1980, Clara Hodges discovered an Indian Site on the Intracoastal Waterway and collected, identified, and donated over 1,900 artifacts to The Office of State Archaeology Research Center in Raleigh, NC. Come learn about this fascinating collection from the Cape Fear Area Indian culture!

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A Well-Designed Life

For busy interior expert Susan Covington, the best answer is "simplify"

By Dana Sachs

Interior designer Susan Covington and I are sitting on the deck of the Fish House Grill on the Intracoastal Waterway. From our table, we can watch the marsh grass wave in the wind, the seagulls . . .

OK, forget the seagulls. Susan is redecorating the Fish House, so she's concentrating on a row of five gooseneck metal lights attached to the side of the building. "See how there are two black and three blue?" she asks.

I squint. The difference between midnight black and charcoal blue is almost imperceptible. "Um, yeah?"

"I need more exterior light on the outer deck tables," she says, so she has had two more goosenecks installed. As of now, the new lights don't match the old ones, but that will change. "Later this week, they'll all be blue."

Other diners can admire seagulls and marsh grass, but it's Susan's business to make sure that the Fish House's paint colors work, that the chairs look stylish, and that the lights give off light. Susan runs Sac Art, which specializes in interior design, renovation and construction. The company also provides caretaking services for area vacation homes. Right now, Susan is redecorating both the Fish House and its partner restaurant and neighbor, the Bridge Tender. These days, her portfolio includes 18 houses under construction or renovation and 20 more that she maintains year-round.

So, she's busy. In fact, by the time we meet for lunch at 11:30 in the morning, Susan is seven-and-a-half hours — yes, seven-and-a-half hours — into her day. She wakes at 4:00, spends two hours at the gym, then jumps into a schedule that might involve overseeing the construction of a $2 million home, picking cabinets for a kitchen and decorating a house for an upcoming holiday. If the owners of one of her caretaking properties are planning a weekend visit, she makes sure there's fresh orange juice in the fridge and flowers in the bathrooms, too.

Soft-spoken and steady, Susan's like the friend you call in a pinch, the one who doesn't freak out and, instead, responds with a comforting, "I'm on it." She's also a successful businesswoman who deflects compliments by heaping praise on an extensive team of associates — architects, construction contractors, landscapers, upholstery cleaners, plumbers and electricians, to name just a few. "I don't have to babysit anyone," she says. "If I ask them to do something, they take care of it."

Susan has barely started the redesign of Fish House, but the owners are her

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friends, and she's been eating here for years. She has never tried the restaurant's Thai Popcorn Shrimp, however. The Fish House version of the coastal staple turns up the heat and pairs the shellfish with sweet and crunchy Asian slaw. "A lot of people would have trouble with this much kick," Susan says, "but I love it."

Most of the tables at the Fish House are outside, overlooking the Intracoastal. The menu, which centers on fresh seafood, is fairly simple, concentrating on starters, tacos, salads, burgers and sandwiches. "I like that it's not just pub grub," Susan says. "You can get good healthy food here." Indeed, all the sauces are house-made, which gives each dish a signature flavor. Lines of spicy sour cream squiggle across the top of the grilled mahi stuffed into our tacos. In the Gorgonzola Walnut Salad, a bright purple walnut-berry vinaigrette combines with a mix of arugula, spinach, red leaf and romaine to create "two totally different tastes — the bitter with the sweet." We end with a White Chocolate Bread Pudding, which is soaked in cinnamon, topped with ice cream and not too sweet. "I like that it's still bready in the center. I like the crispy top." Susan takes another bite, then adds, "My mother would die for that."

Naturally, Susan is a fount of information for the armchair interior designer, especially on the question of "What do I do with all my stuff?" For starters, get rid of it. "Simplify," she says. For those who are fearful of purging, she breaks the process into manageable steps: "If you're talking about your den, simplify the cabinets and shelves first. Then, the tables. Do that until you've simplified the whole room."

She also builds tidiness into her master plans. For pet owners, she will "incorporate an area in the kitchen that has a little nook for bowls," and construct an easy-to-reach hidden cabinet to hold containers of dog or cat food. Because her company builds custom furniture, she can avoid clutter by hiding charging stations in tables and beds. Often, she finds solutions in artful rearranging—

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Design magazines might call Susan's style contemporary or modern, but "those words are too stark," she says "It's hard to be totally minimalistic and have your children's paintings and photos up." When the desire to simplify competes with a fingerpaint masterpiece, Susan finds a middle ground. One mother of four boys, for example, created a gallery of her children's art on a back staircase. "It's how you frame them and the placement that makes it work," she says. In her own house, she hangs family pictures in her closets, turning them into hidden treasures. "When you open the door," she says, "you see something fabulous." Not that she bans children's art in public spaces. Even on the walls of a living room, "you can mingle kid art and real art, too."

The truth is that whimsy works best in small doses. When a client asked Susan to decorate their vacation home in advance of an Easter visit, she did not race to Dollar Tree for Peeps and eggs, and she avoided pastels, too. Her plan relied on natural props, like dried grasses and limbs from trees. On

a bare table in the children's playroom, she arranged two straight lines of tiny neon-colored chicks and rabbits. "They're made of soft chenille," she tells me, "so the children love to play with them."

It's nearly 2 p.m. by the time we finish lunch and Susan's still got five houses to visit before the end of the day. At one, she will spend three or four hours taking measurements for countertops.

As we leave, Susan tells me she's going to switch her heels for a pair of flats. "I could run a marathon in these," she says, looking down at her stylish wedges, "but they don't work on a job site."

The Fish House Grill, at 1410 Airlie Road, is open seven days a week. For information, call (910) 256-3693, or visit www.thefishhousegrill.com. You can find out more about Sac Art by visiting Sac Art on Facebook, or calling (910) 262-5111.

Dana Sachs's latest novel, The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores, online and throughout Wilmington.*

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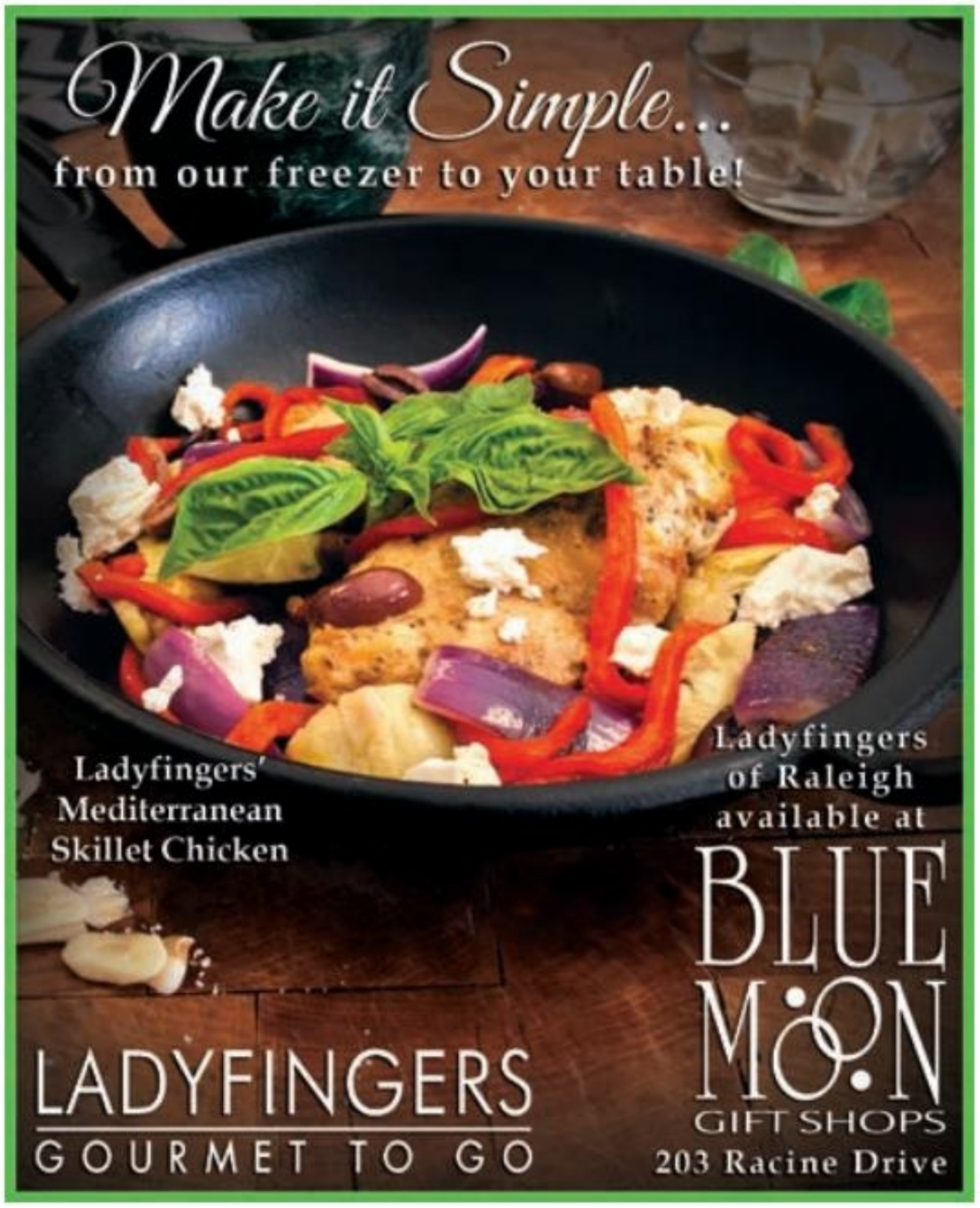

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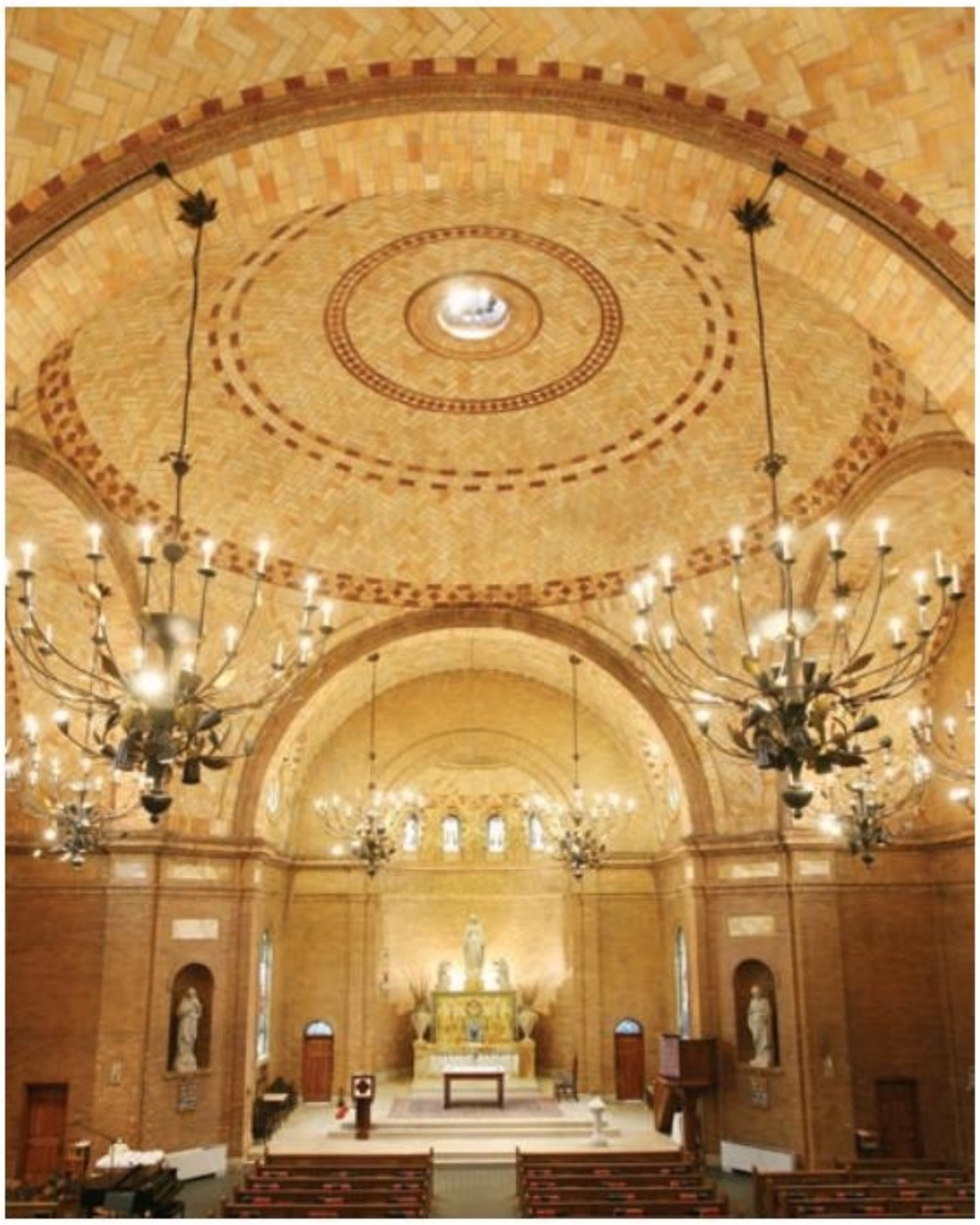
Under the Dome

The architectural genius of Rafael Guastavino



PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIN WHITTLE

By Nan Graham

If you are not too jaded, you may have been hooked a few years back on the TV series of a town trapped under an invisible dome — "Under the Dome," filmed here in Wilmington and its environs — Stephen King's tale of the inexplicable dome, which dropped over a small town that cuts it off from all contact with the outside world. Chaos and terror follow, with neighbors seeing the worst and best of other neighbors' behavior as the panic rises.

In the nonfiction world, another Accidental Southerner created real-life architectural domes all over America. They were masterpieces of a brilliant artisan, Rafael Guastavino, who, though born in Valencia, Spain, became a transplanted Southerner after he took a high-profile job in North Carolina.

After immigrating to the United States in 1881 and establishing himself by collaboration with such architects as Stanford White, Richard Morris Hunt and Charles McKim, Guastavino created some of the "most monumental spaces in America," wrote architectural expert Thomas Prudon. In 1900, an incredible eight of the 10 most beautiful buildings in America featured installations by Guastavino. A mind-boggling thousand of his installations still exist today, long after his death in 1905.

His amazing structures were built on the principle the architect set up in his patented "Guastavino Tile Arch System." The amazing vaulted roof with absence of any sign of support was also fireproof. So meticulous was Guastavino in his work that he even made and fired his own tiles, some soundproof, to construct his re-creation of an ancient method called "cohesive construction."

Guastavino made a substantial imprint on American architecture. The entrance vault to the Boston Library, the arch over Plymouth Rock, vaults over St. John the Divine, St. Patrick's Cathedral, the Great Hall at Ellis Island, Carnegie Hall and the Chapel at West Point are only a handful of his hundreds of soaring vaulted ceilings in the United States. An incredible example of the acoustics of his tiled domes can be found in the archway in the lower concourse of Grand Central Station outside the Oyster Bar. If you stand in a corner outside and speak in a normal voice, you can be heard clearly by another person 32 feet away . . . with his back to you!

Some 14 years after arriving in this country, Rafael Guastavino headed to North Carolina at the bidding of George Washington Vanderbilt, who had determined that he would outdo all Vanderbilts and their impressive Newport and Manhattan mansions by building Biltmore. He did. Even now, Biltmore Estate remains the largest private residence ever constructed in the United States. Guastavino was just the man to help create Vanderbilt's extravagant vision, fashioned after castles in the Loire Valley: a Carolina chateau in the Smoky Mountains west of Asheville, overlooking the French Broad River and a jaw-dropping 125,000 acres, which now comprise Pisgah National Forest.

His designs include ceilings in Biltmore's Lodge Gate, arches featured next to the Winter Room, and those soaring over the great house's massive indoor

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swimming pool. In Asheville, he also constructed the magnificent St. Lawrence Basilica, the church where he was eventually buried.

Guastavino fell in love with North Carolina and ended up spending the rest of his life in these beautiful mountains. He and his wife bought 1,000 acres just outside of Black Mountain, not far from Montreat, built an eccentric 25-room wooden mansion the locals called the Spanish Castle, but which the couple named Rhododendron.

The renowned artisan and his beautiful, much younger (17 years), wife with black hair down past her waist . . . some say she was from Spain, others from Mexico . . . were the talk of Black Mountain.

The grounds at Rhododendron were carefully designed and transformed by the architect himself. The Spanish architect met the renowned creator of Central Park during Frederick Law Olmsted's extensive landscape work at Biltmore. Guastavino was heavily influenced by the genius of Olmsted, called the "Father of American Landscape Architecture" for his vision of the natural world. Guastavino created at Rhododendron his own version of Biltmore: terraces, pathways, roads, dams and ponds carved into the rolling landscapes around the grounds.

Their "castle" was originally built to be a barn, it was reported. It was a curious multilevel concoction built of wood from timber in the architect's newly acquired forest near Black Mountain, cheap and easily accessible. The Guastavinos lived on the second floor and the livestock on the first. Eventually the animals moved to a new barn, and the entire house was converted into a lavishly decorated mansion for the couple. They gave extravagant parties, with wine from their own cellars, at the huge mansion built entirely of timber, no fireproof tiles in the construction, which ironically burned years later after the architect's death. His widow, still living in the house, barely escaped – badly burned but alive.

Guastavino designed the Basilica Shrine of St. Mary here in Wilmington in the Spanish Baroque style. His trademark exuberant ceiling and floating staircase are a fine example of his vaulted technique: using no steel beams or supports. What must Mother Teresa have thought of the Spanish immigrant's work when she worshipped here in 1975, 64 years after Guastavino finished the structure?

The transplanted Spanish Southerner is buried at his St. Lawrence Basilica, which he designed himself in Asheville, not far from the site of his home place Rhododendron in Black Mountain.

Another critic declared of the remarkable Accidental Southerner Rafael Guastavino, "He is probably one of the best examples of a Renaissance man . . . who never got any P.R."

Nan Graham is a frequent contributor with unparalleled knowledge of the south.

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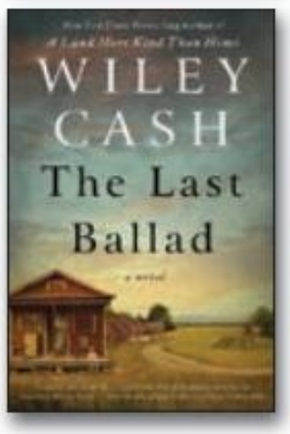

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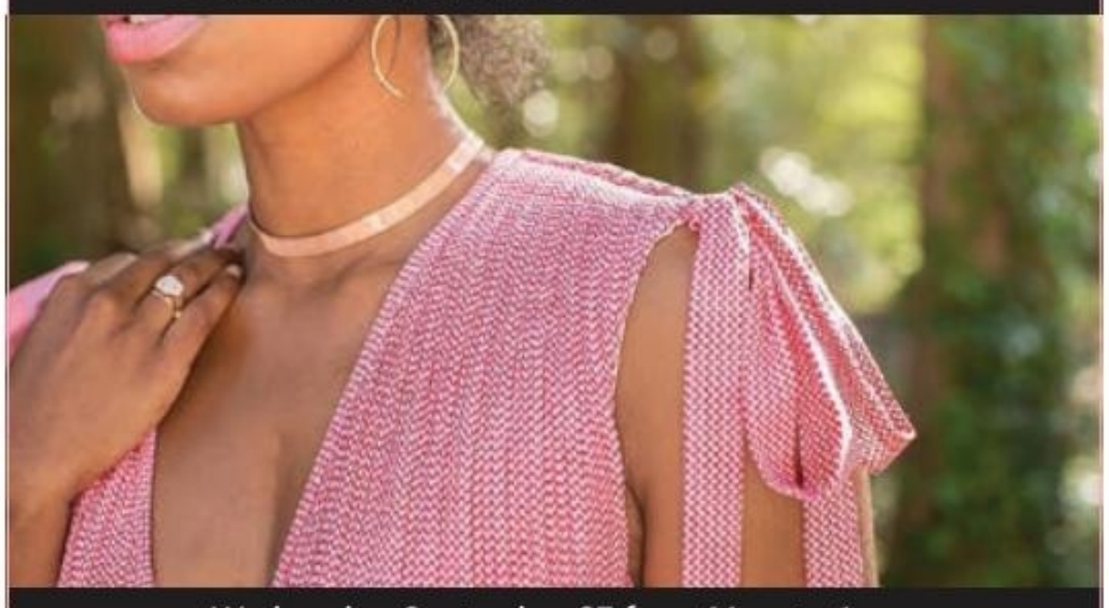

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Bar Staples

Don't come home without 'em

By Tony Cross

I'd like to thank the editors for making this article an absolute breeze for me to write. When I learned the theme of September's issue was Home & Garden, I couldn't resist sharing what I keep in my personal liquor cabinet — my home bar staples. I may be biased, but I'd say it's pretty gratifying when you get that quiet nod of approval from your guests when they inspect your liquor cabinet. Now, for those of you who are lacking in liquor, I assure you creating an impressive spread does not have to be a daunting process. Some couples or singles will throw "Stock the Bar" parties when they move into a new apartment or home, and that's a great way to have a little liquor inventory on your hands. But what if you're not moving anytime soon, or worse, your friends have lousy taste in spirits? This is an easily remedied problem. Here are some of my home essentials; if any of these are foreign to you, then give it a shot. Pun intended.

PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY CROSS

Orange Bitters

Let's start with the smallest ingredient that will go into your cocktail. I'm talking about bitters: the salt and pepper of your drink. Admittedly, Angostura Aromatic bitters is the obvious choice to have on hand; there is none better. However, having the right blend of orange bitters can take your old-fashioned to the next level. I say "blend" because after taking notes from other bartending books years back, I've learned that I like my orange bitters as follows: equal parts Regan's Orange and Angostura Orange Bitters. Gary Regan's formula is more bitter and tastes more like an orange peel to me, while the Angostura has a sweet, almost candy-like aesthetic to it. Put them together, and you get, well, the best of both worlds. The next time you're making an old-fashioned, add a few dashes (in combination with Angostura Aromatic bitters), and you'll see what I'm talking about.

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Disclaimer: Tito's vodka isn't bad. I've enjoyed it plenty. But it's getting a bit cumbersome having to hear people maraud their two cents into conversations about how it's "the best vodka out there." Nonsense. If Tito's was made in Turkey, and not Texas, no one would care about it. Don't believe me? Try Chapel Hill's own TOPO vodka side by side with the Lone Star State's beloved spirit. What intrigued me on first taste was its touch of sweetness. (Is it from the "organic, soft red Carolina wheat" they use when distilling it? I don't know. I asked TOPO spirit guide, Esteban, one night over a round of drinks, and in Tony fashion, forgot.) Anyhow, I firmly believe it trumps other vodkas on the market. Buy a bottle and try it for

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yourself. If anything, you'll have supported a local distillery that graciously supports the community. I've always enjoyed TOPO vodka as follows:

The Wallsteen

Build in a rocks glass:
Large ice cube
2 ounces TOPO Vodka
2 ounces fresh-squeezed organic grapefruit juice
(That's all. And boy, is it delicious.)

Campari

Ah, yes. I would have never imagined years ago that if Campari ran out in my quaint bachelor's pad, I would mutter, or scream, depending on the day. As a matter of fact, one of my first bartending gigs was at a little restaurant, and they carried the Amaro. No one ever ordered it, and the bottle was always three-quarters full. That is, until one night when a lady stopped over to have a Campari and soda. She rambled about how she "only drinks Campari" and how "it's so sophisticated," and blah, blah, blah. I looked at her like she was hallucinating and stopped listening. But *damn*, she was right. My first time trying Campari was in a Negroni, and I thought, "This is awful!" Things change, and over time, so have my taste buds. Just as I've grown to love certain vegetables and herbs, I've changed my tune over certain types of beer, wine and spirits/liqueurs. Another reason that I probably stared at my first Negroni with disgust is because I made it and totally butchered the job. A few months later, it clicked. I had it before dinner, and it was the perfect complement. I was just discussing Amaro the other day with someone who said, "The older I get, the more bitter I like my flavors." I couldn't agree more. Lately, I've been making passionate love to the Boulevardier; think Negroni, but with whiskey instead of gin. It's the bomb, and I'm not ashamed to say it.

Boulevardier

Build in a rocks glass:
Large ice cube
1 1/4 ounces rye whiskey (Wild Turkey for the win)
3/4 ounce Campari
3/4 ounce sweet vermouth (please try Dopo Teatro Cocchi Vermouth, it's bitter too)
Stir for 15 seconds, and then express lemon peel lemon oils over the glass before dropping the peel in. From my liquor cabinet to yours, cheers!

Tony Cross is a bartender who runs cocktail catering company Reverie Cocktails *in Southern Pines.*

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Small Hands

For a city girl visiting the country, summer is all about heat and discovery

By Jason Mott

It's a tradition dating back to my own childhood, when my parents and an aunt in New York would conduct an annual child exchange program. My sisters and I would spend a few weeks in New York and, upon coming back home, my cousin from up North would come down and spend a few weeks running through the sunlight-dappled South. The memory of those times has become one of the defining elements of who I am. I escaped the dirt road I called home for the hustle, bustle and exoticness of the big city. And, to this day, my cousins say the same thing about their trips down here to the low country. Life is a compilation of comfort zones, but we're defined by the areas outside those zones.

Now I'm almost 40 and, while I have no children of my own, I've become the one who's hosting city children.

My niece is 11 and a notorious city girl. Anytime that I see her there's an 80 percent chance that her face is buried in her cellphone. And when it's not buried in a phone, it is buried in a book. That latter one I'm actually supportive of. But that doesn't change the fact that, like a lot of other city kids, the outdoors is a bit of a foreign concept for her.

Which is not to say that she doesn't enjoy the country life. When she does happen to make it down here to the hinterlands of Columbus County for a visit, there are few things she likes better than to head over to the lake and plop down on a bucket with a fishing pole and try her luck. She's still afraid to touch the fish she catches, but we've all been there.

Last summer when she came down to visit I decided to try to get her into cars. Her first lesson — Tire Changing 101 — was done in the middle of August. Everything was hot and muggy. We were both dripping sweat from the smallest amount of effort and, though she didn't complain, we both knew that all she wanted was to be someplace cool and quiet that didn't smell like motor oil and transmission fluid. But she persevered, even managing the occasional smile when she wasn't full of the pre-teen nihilistic disdain for everything in existence.

I can't remember my first time changing a tire and I doubt my niece will either. Given long enough, all memory has the potential to become nothing more than dust and illusion. We collect these moments in life, planning to store them perpetually in the menagerie of our mind, only to pull back the curtain one day to find the memory gone.

I imagine that I first learned to change a tire alongside my father. But, for reasons of longing, I think more about my mother when I think about changing tires. My mother rarely drove. In fact, I only have two memories of her driving: once when she came to pick me up from school, and once when the hood of the car in front of us flew open as they were doing 60 down the highway. I was around 7 or 8 and I remember yelling to mother, "Look! Look!" just as the car ahead of us slammed on the brakes and my mother swerved to avoid the collision.

Everything came out OK that day. The car ahead of us pulled over to fix their hood and we stopped with them. They were a couple of guys from Wilmington. I can't remember their faces, but I remember the sound of my mother's laughter as she and I drove home and, now that everything was OK, she finally laughed about how terribly wrong everything could have gone but didn't. A writing mentor once told me, "Adventure is the tragedy that didn't occur."

My mother and I shared that adventure alone.

Now my niece and I are spending summers fishing and changing tires and, every now and then, I even put her behind the wheel on small, rarely driven backroads. The first time I told her to drive it took me 10 minutes to get her out of the passenger seat. She gripped the wheel with small, soft, city-girl hands and almost screamed when she pressed the throttle and the car responded by pulsing forward. When we finally reached home after a half a dusty mile, she shifted the car into park and exhaled and seemed undecided on whether she wanted to laugh or cry.

In the end, she laughed, and it reminded me of my mother's laughter.

Now it is summer again and she'll be back to visit soon and she'll progress from Tire Changing 101 to other car-maintenance endeavors and, once again, I'll put her behind the wheel of a car and create an adventure that, hopefully, will carry on the tradition of lazy summer days, small hands, cars and the country life.

Jason Mott is a New York Times *best-selling author, a UNCW alumnus and current UNCW writer-in-residence.*

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Ruddy Turnstone

Plump, short-legged and dressed like a clown, this industrious little shorebird is pure delight

By Susan Campbell

Identifying diminutive shorebirds, scrambling around ahead of the waves, tends to challenge birdwatchers and is, in most cases, simply overlooked by the general public. But there is one, the ruddy turnstone, which just may catch your eye. This plump, short-legged little bird, dressed like a clown, certainly stands out among beach-combing birds. Its crazy orange, brown, black and white back plumage, stubby bill and bright orange legs are unmistakable. Amazingly, such a pattern is excellent camouflage away from the beach, among the rocks and debris, where this bird is most often found. Adult individuals in breeding plumage are the brightest. Immature and non-breeding individuals are more muted. But ruddies always have that distinctive squatty profile. In flight, these birds flash a black and white dorsal pattern that is unmistakable as well. A white stripe extends down the back in addition to bold white stripes in the wings and a broad white patch along the base of the tail. Such coloration is also eye-grabbing and is likely a signal to other turnstones, whether it is a potential mate or a competitor for a patch of foraging habitat.

Ruddies are rather specialized foragers. The upturned bill is excellent for flipping stones and is, not surprisingly, where the bird's name originates. Turnstones will turn up all kinds of debris in their quest for food. In summer, this is most often flies and/or fly larvae. But the birds are far less picky away from the breeding grounds, scarfing up a variety of invertebrates. Unfortunately, ruddy turnstones have been found to inadvertently ingest small bits of plastic, which can get trapped in their digestive systems with fatal consequences. This is yet another reason to be very careful not to leave litter of any kind when out and about on our beaches.

If you take the time to look closely, you will find that ruddy turnstones can be found in a variety of locations along our Southeastern coastline during the cooler months. When wading, they are only found in water a couple of inches deep, given their short legs. They may poke at mud or sand for crustaceans. However, ruddies are far more likely found along groins, moist shoreline or up at the tide line peeking into crevices and turning objects in their search for the next meal. Interestingly, turnstones also have specialized feet that are somewhat spiny and are armed with curved toenails that even allow them to move over large, wet rocks on jetties. It probably does not hurt that ruddy turnstones also have a low center of gravity when they clamber about in such precarious habitat. Last but not least, do not be surprised to see these crazy little birds foraging in open grassy areas, especially after a heavy rain.

Ruddy turnstones are long-distance migrants and therefore require a thick layer of fat by the time migration rolls around. That means many hours of uninterrupted feeding in both spring and fall. If they cannot find enough to eat, they cannot depart. These birds typically fly in small flocks and use powered flight for thousands of miles to get to their destination. Most of the North American breeding population ends up in Central America or along the coast of South America. So good numbers should be passing through our area in the coming weeks and, fortunately, some of these calico-colored sandpipers will even linger through the winter. If you are close to any moist spots close to the beach, keep your eyes peeled and you may be surprised to find a ruddy turnstone in your sights — before you know it.

Susan would love to receive your wildlife sightings and photos at susan@ncaves.com.

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Dear Sylvia

I wait for you here with my coffee cup
and newspaper, and I watch the sea.

The dolphins head up the beach,
and in the evening scallop down.

The force of their numbers through surf
pushes toward the condo village,

past the gnashing mongrels gathered
on shore. The dogs collect every morning

to stalk grackles, whose molting feathers
stick out like charred trash or timbers.

Even if these grackles were crash sites,
only dogs would investigate.

Sylvia, I watch the dolphins skimming by
undulating, their splendid continuum

unbroken, water like silk shedding from
their slick gray backs.

Sylvia, I am still waiting for you
to notice me, turn toward my shining skin.

– *Cathryn Hankla*

Lofty Glamour

The late actor Dennis Hopper's customized loft is really a kid-friendly paradise

By William Irvine · Photographs by Rick Ricozzi

Dennis Hopper always had a soft spot for Wilmington. Beginning with the filming of *Blue Velvet*, which first brought the actor to town in 1986, he invested in real estate, both downtown and at Landfall. But Hopper was best known for the restoration of the Masonic Temple building (1899), the five-story, 61,000-square-foot structure on Front Street. It is here that he hoped one day to establish an acting school, a dream that ended with his untimely death in 2010. In the back of the building is the three-story Kress Building Annex, and it is here that Hopper designed a loft apartment that became one of his permanent residences in 1994. It is now the home of Donn Lashley and his family, and will be featured on this year's Back Door Kitchen Tour, an annual benefit for the Residents of Old Wilmington, to be held on Oct. 14.

The 4,200-square-foot commercial loft was on the market for more than 2 1/2 years after it was first offered in 2008. And the listing was not for the faint-of-heart: The space was completely raw — one huge room that required a potential buyer with a lot of imagination. Before its renovation, the space served as the third-floor storage and pricing area for the By-Rite Five and Dime and Department Store, whose sales area was on the floor below. Most people were deterred, but not Lashley. " I saw a diamond in the rough," he says. Hopper had installed a massive skylight and glass French doors leading out to a deck. "He had created a beautiful light box," says Lashley, who bought the loft in 2011 and spent more than a year configuring an elegant new space, which includes three bedrooms and two bathrooms. He lives here with his son, Kade, 16, and daughter, Oonah, 8.

Donn Lashley has taken a circuitous route to his life now as a construction developer. A resident of Wilmington since 1982, he trained in mountaineering and is still an avid climber (his bedroom features a collection of summit rocks from his climbs around the world). He began his working life doing height-related construction tasks, which evolved into window cleaning and exterior painting. He now owns Carolina Commercial Coatings, a painting company that specializes in high-rise work, and has bought and restored several houses in the historic district, which is another passion: "I am truly a restoration person." He also owns the Roudabush Building, among other historic downtown properties.

Initially, the old-house fix-ups were a way to finance a round-the-world sailing trip,

Most people were deterred, but not Lashley. "I saw a diamond in the rough," he says.

which he figured would require him to be away from Wilmington for three to five years. "That was a dream that never happened," he says. But travel is very important to the whole family. His son, Kade, has a passport that would make a 60-year-old green with envy. In 2015, father and son shipped a car to Buenos Aires and drove 1,500 miles to the tip of South America before driving the car all the way back home: "And there was also Patagonia, trekking, Easter Island, the Galapagos . . . we have had some great travel experiences. It's such an important thing," says Lashley. Evidence of their world travels can be seen throughout the house.

To call this a kid-friendly loft would be an example of extreme understatement. There is a climbing wall, Oonah's outdoor storefront on the deck — she has a thriving soap and candle business and a culinary enterprise, Oonah's Mud Kitchen — as well as aerial silks for acrobatics, exercise mats, electric guitars . . . anything you could ever want to do. "The thing that's so great about this space is that you can be loud — skate, have hula-hoop lessons, pretty much have total freedom to do any activity," says Lashley. In addition to serving as Lashley's garage, the immense ground-floor level features — in no particular order — bongo drums, drum sets, microphones, dirt bikes, motorcycles, Ping-Pong and other game tables. Kid paradise.

Oonah's colorful bedroom has a built-in upper

KADE

"The thing that's so great about this space is that you can be loud — skate, have hula-hoop lessons, pretty much have total freedom to do any activity," says Lashley.

level reached by its own staircase. "I love my bedroom," she says. "I like to have my friends over and hang out in the loft." As she is a big reader, her room has many retrofitted bookshelves and storage spaces throughout.

One of the most stunning features of the loft is the generous 2,000-square-foot outdoor deck space, which can be reached through French doors installed by Hopper. Originally used by the actor as a plein-air art studio (he liked to work on large canvases outdoors), the feeling is very Californian, with rope hammocks and superior views northward to the Murchison Building and south to the Cape Fear River and the bridge. A spiral staircase now leads to Oonah's rooftop clubhouse (a birthday present from her father) and will be the future home of a roof garden.

And then, of course, there is the kitchen. Dennis Hopper installed the massive 20-foot-long kitchen island/counter, which is composed of black

We Got Sand

"I just found this old metal fire door downstairs, stripped off the paint, and added these metal sawhorses. It's a great table."

granite and industrial-grade stainless-steel panels. Lashley tore out floor-to-ceiling plywood cabinets that lined the back wall and designed an ingenious round pantry pod, a wooden sliding-door structure that features a window with natural light. There is also a large commercial stove and prep sink, and butcher-block countertops. And it's made for entertaining. "The great thing about this kitchen is that you can be part of the action — it overlooks a 3,000-square-foot room. We often eat dinner at the counter. And it flows so well with great storage and counter space," says Lashley. When they're not eating in the kitchen, meals take place around a massive square dining room table that Lashley made: "I just found this old metal fire door downstairs, stripped off the paint, and added these metal sawhorses. It's a great table." Dennis Hopper would approve.

William Irvine is the senior editor of Salt. *His latest book,* Do Geese See God?: A Palindrome Anthology, *was published last month.*

Residents of Old Wilmington's 12th annual Back Door Kitchen Tour will take place on October 14 from 11 am to 5 pm. In addition to the Lashley loft, there will be several other properties downtown, including an artist's studio designed by architect James Post. Tickets go on sale September 1 and are $25 in advance at Ivy Cottage, Finkelstein's, or online at rowilmington.org. Since its founding in 1973, Residents of Old Wilmington (ROW) promotes preservation and beautification of the downtown historic districts through advocacy, volunteer projects and monetary grants.

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Arboretum Man

The art of keeping New Hanover County's most beautiful public garden

By Anne Barnhill · Photographs by Andrew Sherman

Al Hight is a handsome man whose face has been tanned and etched by years in the Carolina sunshine. Referring to himself as a "just an old redneck farm boy," his self-effacing manner hides the fact that he takes his position as the director of the New Hanover County Arboretum quite seriously: Hight hides a lively sense of humor with a deadpan delivery. Only his laughing blue eyes give him away. One look around the arboretum and a visitor will easily discern that Hight loves what he does; the arboretum is evidence of what can happen when a person combines his passion with service to the world.

An arboretum is defined as a place where trees grow, but Hight has a slightly different definition for his: "This place is more like a display garden — though we have plenty of trees. It's an educational facility, a sort of lab for programs." And he's worked hard over the last nine years to ensure that the arboretum is both beautiful and functional.

The New Hanover County Arboretum got started in the early 1980s and was dedicated in 1989. It developed haphazardly on land that used to be an elementary school. The main school building burned in 1982, but the surviving structures are still in use. "My goal is to make it a prettier place and more functional," says Hight. "I want to create a place where people can come to enjoy the area. That meant we had to add turf areas where children can play. We can now have weddings here, and we've improved the traffic flow."

Currently a Welcome Garden is under development, which will include new facilities for those working at the arboretum. In Hight's vision, the old school buildings, which are "not aesthetically pleasing and are technologically archaic," will be replaced by a multistory building that will "leave a smaller footprint." The cost, of course, will be high: "We will need to raise about $2.5 million in our capital campaigns," he says. And as with so many state-funded facilities, funding is always a challenge.

With a relatively small staff, the arboretum depends a great deal on its volunteers. "We have around 400 folks who volunteer at some level. And we offer a Master Gardeners program, one of the biggest in the state. Each year, we compete with Winston-Salem to see who can attract the most people," says Hight, with a slight grin. The program includes 14 three-hour sessions with 50 hours donated during the year. After these are completed, certification

ensues, and to keep the certificate current, a gardener must volunteer at least 25 hours per year. The courses include consumer horticulture, lawn and garden, trees and shrubs. The arboretum also holds 4-H classes that center around wellness and healthy food choices as well as learning about plants. Family and Consumer Service classes are offered, too. These courses are food-related: canning, freezing, safety and wellness.

Of course, offering such classes to the public is a part of the Arboretum's mission. But the heart of the arboretum is the wonderful gardens themselves: Rather than being limited to one large garden, the arboretum is divided into several different kinds of gardens; there's something for everyone.

"One of my favorite gardens is the Ability Garden," says Hight. "There's only one other like it in the state. It's designed to serve people with mental and physical disabilities. A lot of the younger people need socialization, and our programs offer that, along with learning about plants. They can get their hands in the dirt." The classes are ongoing and run from fall to spring.

For those interested in North Carolina plants, there is a Pollination Garden with native selections as well as samples of various turfs that do well in the Carolina heat. Nearby, you'll find the Vegetable Garden, maintained mostly by volunteers. (All produce grown in the garden is donated to the Good Shepherd Center in Wilmington.) There's also the Herb Garden, the Japanese Garden, the Contemplation Garden, the Children's Garden and, my favorite, the Rose Garden.

"We have around 130 varieties of roses," says Hight, leading me from roses to the exquisite Japanese Garden. A graceful red arch marks the entrance, which instantly captivates the viewer with the verdant landscape — a feast of shade, texture and color. A

gentle brook babbles as we approach the tea house at the center of the garden.

"This was finished in 2011 and is pretty authentic," he says. "Japanese gardens focus on symbolism, which explains why you see those rocks. Their purpose is to slow the visitors down so they can stop and enjoy the beauty and serenity."

At the far end of the arboretum is the Contemplative Garden, created in honor of Durwood Baggett, who worked in the arboretum during the 1970s. Sadly, he died at age 92, just a few weeks before the garden was dedicated. Here, you'll find a small labyrinth for walking. Flying over the labyrinth are the flags from each branch of the U.S. military. This garden is dedicated to all who have served our country; bricks are available for purchase to honor those heroes.

As we stroll into the former Woodland Garden, the contrasting plants with vibrant colors catch the eye. "We have a volunteer — Carolyn Thomas — who designs the annual flowers. She does such a great job — much better than anything I could do," says Hight with a shrug. He points to some colorful picnic tables on a grassy area near the Children's Garden. "Our visitors are mostly families — you'll see grandparents, sometimes, even great-grandparents — with their grown children and grandchildren. They like to explore the garden and pack a lunch. We hope to redo the Children's Garden next year. Our Art in the Arboretum will help fund the project," he says.

Art in the Arboretum is an annual event held the first weekend in October and is orchestrated by the Friends of the Arboretum in conjunction with the Wilmington Art Association. This is the biggest fundraiser of the year for the arboretum and is a juried art show featuring all kinds of art, from oils and acrylics to metalwork, glass, wood and jewelry. Exhibits are featured inside the buildings as well as in the gardens.

The Children's Garden is charming, with a variety of musical instruments that kids can play. A gingerbread house sits in the center, and inside, children can write on the walls, even on the ceilings, with chalk. A story walk leads up to the house. Little ones can read the signs and then try to follow the instructions: "Can you join your hand behind your back and make a honeybee stinger? Hum as you go in circles to the next page."

Beautiful artwork enhances the experience of all the arboretum's gardens. In the pond, a mighty dragon rears its glorious head. In the Children's Garden is a sculpture of a small boy and girl climbing a tree. Throughout the various areas, colorful pinwheels, fanciful frogs and other animals adorn the gardens. "We like to use local artists. Andy Cobb has work here and Dumay Gorham is the one who created the dragon," says Hight. "One of our priorities with the new Children's Garden is to add more art."

Anyone who has ever tried to create a garden knows the task in unending. There is always a lot to do. When I asked Hight what he does for fun, he stopped, put his hand to his chin and said not a word; the question seemed to befuddle him. "I don't know," he says with an embarrassed smile. He pauses. "I used to enjoy running and playing tennis. Used to enjoy cars . . . now I spend most of my time working. Keeps me out of trouble." His blue eyes are full of mischief.

Though Hight doesn't mention any traditional escapes from his work, he does share information about the two other loves of his life: The first is his own backyard. "I guess you could call it a horticulturist's personal garden — I've got one of just about everything in there. It's a small space — about 65 by 35 feet — but each plant is like a kid; I can't pick which is a favorite," he says.

Another project is a new enterprise he and a friend have started called Brunswick Berries. Currently, the modest farm grows strawberries, but Hight has a vision of adding peach trees, asparagus, cabbage and broccoli. Like all farmers, he is at the mercy of the elements: "It's never easy. I grew up on a 100-acre farm in the Piedmont where the soil was red clay and rocky. Here, it's sandy. Both difficult but, with enough organic matter, you can turn the dirt and sand into something good."

From the meticulous care of the gardens to the ambitious dreams for the arboretum's future, Al Hight obviously loves his work. "The best thing is watching the families — old and young can socialize and just hang out. We see a lot of mothers with toddlers. They can feel secure here," says Hight, with a touch of pride.

"There are worse places to be," he says wryly, those blue eyes sparkling once again.

Art in the Arboretum will be held this year from Oct. 6 to 8. In addition to works by local artists in all media, there will be a raffle, silent auction and performances by local musicians. The New Hanover County Arboretum is open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily. Admission is free. 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. (910)798-7660. nhcarboretum.org.

Anne Barnhill's latest novel, The Beautician's Notebook, *set on the North Carolina coast, was released in April 2017.*

The Kinston Connection

How a town on the rise will soon delight diners in the Port City

By Jason Frye · Photographs by Cindy Burnham

A note on the heavy wooden doors of the former Farmers & Merchants Bank reads, "If you're checking in before 3 p.m., please call for assistance," then there's a phone number. It's an odd note to find on the locked doors of an obvious bank building at noon on a weekday. Except this is the former Farmers & Merchants Bank, now Kinston, North Carolina's only boutique hotel, The O'Neil. The tallest building in town, the boxy O'Neil's limestone face stretches six stories into the sky, grand and imperious in the way bank buildings once were. It's lovely and smooth, with blocks laid tight, columns gleaming gray-white in the noon sun, the few ornamental touches defining the building and cementing it, architecturally, in the City Beautiful Movement.

And it is beautiful. The building commands your attention. It did this as the bank and now as The O'Neil, Kinston's most upscale hostelry.

Stephen Hill resurrected this monolith, giving it a new name to honor both the town where Hill was born, raised and returned to, and his father, Robert O'Neil Hill.

Through projects like The O'Neil and the Mother Earth Motor Lodge — a revamped 1960s motel a few blocks away — Hill is making a mark on his hometown. But that's not all. Hill and his son-in-law, Trent, founded Mother Earth Brewing, a Kinston fixture and brewery familiar to fans of North Carolina craft beer, and Mother Earth Spirits, where he's producing craft whiskey, gin and rum. He's also one of the forces behind The Boiler Room, of chef Vivian Howard notoriety, a modern oyster bar-burger joint that has the worn-in feel of your favorite T-shirt.

"This city is evolving," says Hill, perhaps the chief catalyst. "Slowly but surely, it's becoming a new, better version of itself."

Lucky for Kinston, it has — and has always had — some motivated characters.

Kinston's story is like that: the rise, the fall, the rise again.

In 1849 the town was incorporated; by 1850 there were nearly 500 residents; by 1860, 1,000 resided in the town. Then, in 1861, war broke out and Kinston soon found itself in the thick of it. The Battle of Kinston in 1862. Men and boys joined up or were conscripted into the Confederate Army and Navy. Construction began on an ironclad, the C.S.S. *Neuse*. Intended for use on the Neuse River (which flows through town) and on inland waterways in North Carolina, the *Neuse* was an imposing sight until the combination of an inexperienced crew and spring drought saw the ship run aground, mired in the mud of its namesake river.

There it sat, stuck, a river-bound gun emplacement and target for advancing Union troops. During the Battle of Wyse Fork, the Union attacked and the results were hopeless, leaving the crew with one choice: Scuttle the ship. The crew of the Neuse set it afire, lit fuses leading to explosives in the bow, and fled. The ship burned, blew up and stayed in the river until 1963, when it was salvaged. Today the *Neuse* is one of the leading attractions in Kinston, residing in a downtown museum, surrounded by recovered artifacts and interactive exhibits, capped with the ghostly frame of its upper workings. Nearby, the C.S.S. *Neuse II*, a full-scale replica, sits a few hundred yards from where the original was built, another reminder of the town's powder-keg past.

After the Civil War, the town continued to grow, and a series of carriage shops — many employing highly skilled former slaves to do the fine work — anchored the economy along with a vigorous tobacco and cotton trade. By the turn of the 20th century, the economy was bullish and expanding. Lumber and cotton mills added to the mix. World War II arrived and slowed growth, but it picked back up with vigor, growing strong on the backs of a DuPont plant and a pharmaceutical production facility. This ended in the 1960s, when textile production began to slow. Thus went the town's economy, slowing, limping its way back to its agrarian base.

Minor League Baseball — first in the form of the Kinston Eagles, then Blue Jays, then Indians — distracted the town, but couldn't save the sagging economy. Kinston needed to mature, to evolve, to become in order to fully appreciate the impact baseball — and all of tourism, really — could have on their community. When the town was ready, teams began looking again; then, in 2017, the Down East Wood Ducks marked the return of baseball to the city, a city now ready and able to support and enjoy the benefits of the game.

The town had matured, had become.

Back at Mother Earth Brewing, Hill reflects on the evolution of his town.

"People ask me, 'Stephen, why Kinston?' And I could have built Mother

Earth in Raleigh or Durham, or I could have done what I did: build it here. I'm here. My daughters are here. My family's here. My heart."

He sits for a moment in silence, then looks at the wall where a dozen paintings hang. Each one a different size, each one a different scene. Fans of Mother Earth's beer would recognize each as a label on a bottle or can. They were painted by a local artist and art teacher and friend to both founders of Mother Earth Brewing.

"Arts drive a community. They drive economic development," Hill says. "Right now I'm chairman of the North Carolina Arts Council and we have 197 different categories we've defined as art. We probably need to expand that."

He looks out onto the floor of the brewery, over the tops of the fermenting tanks.

"Beer's an art, culinary's an art, and they're part of what's driving Kinston's evolution right now."

This passion for art and hometown drove Hill to purchase the Kinston Motor Lodge — which had sunk to the level of no-tell-motel — in 2014 and renovate it. After a year of planning and a year of site work, the Mother Earth Motor Lodge reopened in spring 2017, transformed from its seedier past into a retro-chic hotel. Vivid colors set off the doors, drapes and linens; bold paintings of local sights hang in every room and suite; the desks are a single piece of curved glass, chic, sleek and sexy; even the mini-fridge is a perfect pop of retro-nostalgia.

Downtown is like this: parts of it empty and having run its course, other parts stirring back to life. Along Queen Street, some shops are open, others are shuttered, but the second story of most buildings are vacant. Queen Street Deli does a brisk business and is a lunch hotspot for locals and visitors, and the Kinston Community Council for the Arts' studio and gallery stays busy, but for the moment there's not much else on Queen: Everything seems to be happening one street west, on Heritage Street. There you find the farmers market, the C.S.S. *Neuse II*, Chef & the Farmer, Mother Earth Motor Lodge, Middle Grounds (a coffee shop), Sugar Hill Pizzeria, Red Room, Lovick's Café, The Overland Gallery, and several specialty shops on the verge of opening. On the blocks off Heritage are Ginger 108 (a surprisingly good pan-Asian and sushi restaurant), North Street Pub and Eatery, Olvera Street Taqueria, Boiler Room Oyster Bar.

Ten years ago this wasn't the case, which is what excites Hill about the next phase of Kinston's growth: Queen Street. The city has received funding to revitalize Queen., and investment is flowing into downtown from within and outside the community. Hill and others hope that over the next three years, Queen Street will be unrecognizable in terms of the energy and activity along Kinston's main street.

It can happen.

Chef Vivian Howard and her husband, Ben Knight, who own Chef & the Farmer — arguably one of the best farm to table restaurants in the region — are partners with Hill on Boiler Room Oyster Bar. Howard moved back to her hometown of Kinston to open Chef & the Farmer in 2006, and it took off. Reviewers drove in from Raleigh, bloggers found it, diners were making hour-long, even 90-minute drives from the Triangle and Wilmington to eat there. Howard established her reputation for excellence and creativity, each seasonal menu topping the last in terms of flavor and approach to ingredients.

Then came the James Beard Award nominations, a series of them; and *A Chef's Life*, the PBS show starring the restaurant, Howard and Knight. The spotlight turned solidly to Kinston, a town formerly unknown to many (even many North Carolinians), and it stayed. On any given day you'll find people standing outside Chef & the Farmer posing for an Instagram shot in front of the sign or window shopping in their wine and gift shop (where you can pick up Howard's amazing cookbook, *Deep Run Roots*, a T-shirt or libations). In the evenings the dining room is packed, with at least one person at every table stealing glances to the open kitchen to see if she's working the line, another admiring Knight's oversized abstract paintings that hang on the walls.

As well they should flock. Her food is exceptional, her approach to ingredients is reverent, and her kitchen brigade believes in her philosophy, so they cook like she does: from the heart. Her dishes are familiar and surprising. Take the Cornmeal Tagliatelle. Cornmeal we know, tagliatelle we know, but not together. The wide noodles are hearty and toothsome, filling, and the rest of the dish — turnip, smoked mushrooms, leeks, lemon, cream — make for a vegetarian dish that many won't even realize is vegetarian. The smoked mushrooms and leeks provide a meaty bite of pungency to each forkful, the turnip brings a little more toothsomeness, and the lemon brightens it, bringing balance to the cream. It's familiar, but completely new.

The kitchen's approach to fish is the same: You know it, but you're surprised by it. As the menu changes seasonally — and seasonally in this case can mean weekly, even monthly changes, just like on the farm; fresh strawberries are available for a short window then they disappear, only to return in preserved form; tomatoes are a summer fruit; fish is available as it's available. No farm-raised, flash-frozen fish will hit the plate here. You'll find red snapper served with green strawberries and hollandaise one week, fried catfish with crispy mustard greens the next. Pheasant appears on the menu; likewise, mullet roe shows up when it's fresh. The salads shift from kale and mustard or turnip greens as the season shifts into leaf lettuce and arugula weather, then to head lettuces.

It's this approach to the regionality in her food that helped gain attention to Howard's cooking; the other part is her superb preparation. Knight says diners come in with a connection to the place, to her food.

"They see the restaurant on TV and feel like they know the place. They're excited when they come in because they know our reputation," he says. "Serving diners like this, frankly, it makes the front of house more enjoyable because they're engaged with the food from the time they make a reservation."

Howard and Knight will capitalize on that reputation and those engaged, excited diners in Wilmington when their next restaurant opens this fall on Greenfield Street near Satellite and the South Front apartments. Before an official announcement was made, word was out and it generated a buzz. Questions flew among Wilmington's foodies ranging from, "Are we getting a Chef & the Farmer?" to "Will it be another Boiler Room? We could use a killer oyster bar" to "I heard it was pizza."

The answer is c) Benny's Big Time Pizzeria.

"It's a brick oven pizza with house made pastas," Knight says. "The menu is a throwback to those red sauce Italian places. All of it is hand-done and all of it is nostalgic in some way." Think Bolognese sauce and fresh noodles. Think Italian chopped salad. Think caprese in season. Think a pizza menu with a handful of curated pies and a slew of build-your-own options.

"We want a different vibe, a family vibe. For the décor, we're playing with the idea of a '70s Pizza Hut: booths, dark wood, faux Tiffany lamps over the tables, but all updated." In other words, referential to the idea of those kind of Italian places, but not necessarily reverential.

Knight says they're excited about the developments in Kinston — the redo of Queen Street, the bevvy of businesses and restaurants opening around them, the return of baseball (where Chef & the Farmer's food truck makes appearances on Food Truck Fridays), the spirit of pride that's swelling across town — and that they feel a similar energy in Wilmington. "A desire for what's next" he calls it. As part of the redevelopment of the south side of town, Benny's Big Time Pizzeria is set to be an anchor for growth and will likely inject the food community — from diners to chefs, visitors and locals alike — with a boost. "Vivian and I have always been about opportunity," says Knight, "and our joining the Wilmington food scene is an opportunity for us to grow and for us to contribute to the culture of the town."

Kinston Goes Big Time

Wilmington has been abuzz with the news that the couple behind the celebrated Kinston restaurant Chef & the Farmer — Vivian Howard and husband, Ben Knight — would be opening a restaurant in the Port City. Another Chef & the Farmer? Maybe a second location of the Boiler Room, the oyster bar and hamburger joint featured on Vivian's PBS series, *A Chef's Life*?

The wait is over and the answer is here: Benny's Big Time Pizzeria is set to open this fall. According to Knight, Oct. 1 is the target date, but a few delays in permitting may push that back a bit. "We're excited about it," Knight says. "We are hiring a chef de cuisine and looking for sous chefs and line cooks and, so far, we've found a number of passionate, talented cooks who want to be part of what we're doing."

Benny's Big Time Pizzeria will seat 90 diners and serve up old-school, red-tablecloth Italian food located in the city's new South Front community, which will also comprise apartments, retail and office space in a series of converted industrial buildings. Pizza, pasta, salads; dine in and take out; but, more importantly, a foray into Wilmington's dining scene.

The Backstory

Chef Vivian Howard runs the kitchen at Kinston's Chef & the Farmer, and Ben Knight keeps the front of house, wine and bar program running smoothly. You may have seen them on the Peabody-award winning PBS series, *A Chef's Life*, which follows Howard, Knight, their kids and restaurant family through everything from slice-of-life scenes to ingredients as they move from the field to the kitchen to the plate. Howard's unabashed love for the regional food of eastern North Carolina shines in her accent, her menu, the farmers and purveyors she visits, as well as in the recipes she presents on each episode.

Howard comes from Deep Run, North Carolina, a small community just outside Kinston, which is also the inspiration for the name of her award-winning cookbook, *Deep Run Roots*. After college, she moved to New York and worked for the likes of chefs Scott Barton (Voyage), Wyley Dufresne and Sam Mason (wd~50), and was on the opening team for Chef Jean Georges Vongerichten's Spice Market.

Knight, a Northwestern alumnus, is an accomplished artist as well as restaurant wizard. His paintings — large, bold, and abstract — hang in Chef & the Farmer and in galleries around the state.

In 2005, the couple moved from New York back to Kinston, where they opened Chef & the Farmer. Since then the restaurant has been on an upward trajectory despite the challenges of their menu — nearly 3/4 of the food in the restaurant comes from within a 60-mile radius — and a fire that closed the restaurant briefly. Today, Chef & the Farmer is destination dining, drawing hungry patrons from North Carolina and beyond.

Eat. Drink. Stay.

Stay: The O'Neil, 200 N. Queen St., Kinston. (252) 208-1130 or www.the-oneil.com, Rooms range $239 – ?
Mother Earth Motor Lodge, 501 N. Herritage St., Kinston. (252) 520-2000 or www.motherearthlodge.com , Rooms range $109–29 nightly. Circa 1964

Eat: Chef & the Farmer, 120 W. Gordon St., Kinston. (252) 208-2433 or www.chefandthefarmer.com
Boiler Room Oyster Bar, 108B N. St., Kinston. (252) 208-2433 or www.boiler-roomoysterbar.com

Drink: Mother Earth Brewing or Mother Earth Spirits, 311 N. Herritage St., Kinston. (252) 208-2437

Do: Visit the C.S.S. Neuse Civil War Interpretive Center, 100 N. Queen St., Kinston. (252) 522-2107 or www.nchistoricsites.org/neuse
Catch a minor league game with Down East Wood Ducks. Grainger Stadium, 400 E. Grainger Ave., Kinston. Tickets: $6–12. (252) 686-5172. Schedule at www.woodducksbaseball.com

Jason Frye, who lives to eat, is a well-traveled and frequent contributor to Salt *magazine.*

A Walk *in the* Woods

In a wild and natural world, says zoologist extraordinaire Karen Smith Linehan, everyone can be a child again

Story & Photographs by Virginia Holman

"Do you want to see my fort?" Karen Smith Linehan's blue eyes sparkle behind her glasses. I'm transported back to childhood, a time when friendships were forged by such simple invitations.

"Absolutely," I say. (I'd tell you the location, but I'm sworn to secrecy.)

When was the last time you made, or ventured inside, a fort? Probably about the same time you wandered through a field with a pal, looked him or her in the eye and said, "Race you!" before tearing off at top speed toward home. It's not the sort of thing you expect to hear from a professional educator in her 50s. But Karen Smith Linehan is no ordinary teacher. As the "nature teacher" at Friends School of Wilmington, she's become one of Wilmington's most invaluable natural resources.

Karen leads us down a small wooded trail in Carolina Beach State Park. The wind picks up as we approach the river. Up ahead, an Eastern kingsnake crosses our path. "Would you like me to get it so we can take a better look?" Then, just as matter-of-factly as you might turn a page, she reaches for the tail of the snake. She gently lifts it with one hand, then two.

The snake is surprisingly calm. It seems more compelled to explore its new environment than to escape. Karen's grip is relaxed, so the snake moves with ease. It wraps around her arm, then slithers toward the binoculars above her hip, forked black tongue flicking all the while. When it reaches her shoulder-length cornsilk-colored hair, she slowly lowers her hands to keep it in her line of sight. "What a beauty!" she says. The kingsnake coils around her wrists and hands, strung through them like a child's string game. We snap a few photos and then she releases it to the ground. "Thank you," she says to the snake as it glides away.

We continue walking to her fort until the path dead-ends, then we veer off into the leaf litter. Soon, we are waist-high in the grass several yards from the river's edge. Karen leads me along a strip of sand. Look west and there's an inky, deep tidal pool about 10 yards from the river's edge; look east and there's wide, grassy marsh, open as a prairie. It's so quiet here that you can hear the fiddler crabs as they scuttle through the Spartina and needlerush. We take a few more steps, and the path narrows until we reach a flooded spot where the marsh and the pond feed each other. A small plank serves as our bridge. Karen stoops to avoid a low-hanging wax myrtle — both a barrier and a point of entry to her sanctuary. "Here it is." It's a small space, far from the paths that people travel, but the perfect

retreat to observe, reflect and record the happenings in this dynamic environment. Karen built her fort about five years ago, and she has been visiting this spot on the Cape Fear River for nearly three decades.

Even as a child Karen was most at home alone and out of doors. Though she grew up just 3 miles from downtown Raleigh, where her father, the preeminent criminal defense attorney Wade Smith, had his practice, there were a few wild places close enough to visit. Karen says her early years exploring the natural world served both as a refuge from the confusion of the world and as a place to discover its wonders. "As a child in the natural world, you have a sense that there is something unseen that is watching over you, but you don't know what that is. I think that's why you return to nature, to connect with that." It sounds vaguely spiritual, but Karen frames this connection more in terms of curiosity and inquiry. She says there's something powerful about being a child in the natural world and notes that children are often the most uninhibited creators. "When you are a child in nature, at first you don't know what things are called, so you name them." After children have, in a sense, created this world, she says they discover "the real names." In this way, she says, children begin the process of connecting and communicating the observed world with others. Karen speaks from personal as well as professional experience.

Unlike many children without regular access to natural areas, Karen knows she was lucky to be a young suburban girl encouraged by both parents to explore her outdoorsy side. Though her father was something of an amateur naturalist, "my mother," she says, "was not as comfortable out of doors; despite that, she worked very hard to nurture my interests. She allowed me to have any kind of animal in my bedroom." Snakes got loose, spider-egg cases hatched, but "she tolerated it all beautifully." Though her mother did not share her interests, Karen credits her for creating a safe space where her childhood passions could flourish. This space and openness to differences has become a key component of Karen's classroom; it's also a concept that is actively fostered at the Friends School of Wilmington.

As a girl obsessed with the lives of animals, especially snakes, Karen "felt she was somehow different from most girls" her age. This feeling of separateness fostered a particular kind of loneliness. "Sometimes I was proud of this difference, but other times it felt isolating." This sense of estrangement drove her deeper into the natural world. "There were woods near my home, and a little creek. All through my elementary years, I went straight to the creek after school. It was my salvation and a sort of self-medicating strategy."

Later, as an undergraduate at Chapel Hill, she flirted with the idea of going to law school but soon discarded it to pursue zoology. Even though she was pursuing her passion, she felt a bit out of place. Her adviser said that she could only do a few things with an undergraduate zoology degree. "I was told I could go to medical school or I could become a medical illustrator. When I said I wanted to work with children to educate them about the natural world, they said I was in the wrong place, that I should be in the school of education." That path held little interest for her. She was interested in learning about animals, not pedagogy. She held fast to her dream and graduated with a degree in zoology.

Eventually, she was able to put together the life she envisioned. When she and her husband moved to Wilmington in 1989, they had an 18-month-old and she was five months pregnant. In order to retain some flexibility in her schedule, she "worked as a freelance natural science educator, sewing together a variety of jobs teaching children about nature." After she enrolled her daughters at the Friends School of Wilmington, Karen left her job as a contract naturalist for the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, where she helped teachers across the state incorporate environmental learning in their classrooms, and took a job at the Friends School of Wilmington. At last, she had a classroom of her own.

Now 15 years on, Karen has mentored a generation of children. Over time, she's transformed her solitary time in the outdoors into a community of children, parents and teachers who appreciate and explore the natural world. "There many children like me who seek solace in the outdoors — who seek a kinship with the natural world." Though she laments that those natural spaces are dwindling each day, she is always looking for ways to deepen her students' relationship with the ecology and wildlife in the Cape Fear region.

Each grade at Friends School of Wilmington explores a placed-based theme to enhance instruction in math, reading and writing. "We intentionally focus on real-life subjects and issues within the Wilmington community. This year it's the Cape Fear River."

Karen and her colleagues emphasize that nature is not a destination. "It's around us all the time. All we have to do is look." The teachers help students form bonds with the animals and plants around the schoolyard by creating and maintaining pollinator and vegetable gardens, and enjoying what Karen calls a "loose parts" playground. This is a space where children can use random objects and the natural environment to create music, forts, sculptures and whatever comes to mind.

Karen also comments on the barriers women working in the environmental field can face. "As a child, I did not have many female role models who were naturalists. I knew about Rachel Carson and Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, which was published when I was 10." Karen and her colleagues are helping to eradicate this lingering retrograde sexism by example. She, her co-teacher, and their full time assistant form a trio of female teachers. Their monthly hikes are all led by women teachers, and as NC certified environmental educators they routinely handle wild animals. "We believe it is important for students to see us interacting confidently and positively with the outdoor environment."

Before we part, I take a look through my photos. I'm struck for a moment by how rare it is to see a portrait of a confident, middle-aged Southern woman out in the wild. Especially since many women now work as environmental educators, park rangers, scientists, writers and activists.

As Karen gets on her bike to head home, I think about the notion of the butterfly effect, and how small movements can lead to dramatic shifts in the environment. Karen is one such creature — moving to her own beat, extending the walls of her classroom to include the outdoors — quietly shifting the focus of the old status quo by the simple radical act of being herself, and offering children spaces where they may do the same.

Virginia Holman is a regular Salt *contributor and teaches in the creative writing department at UNCW.*

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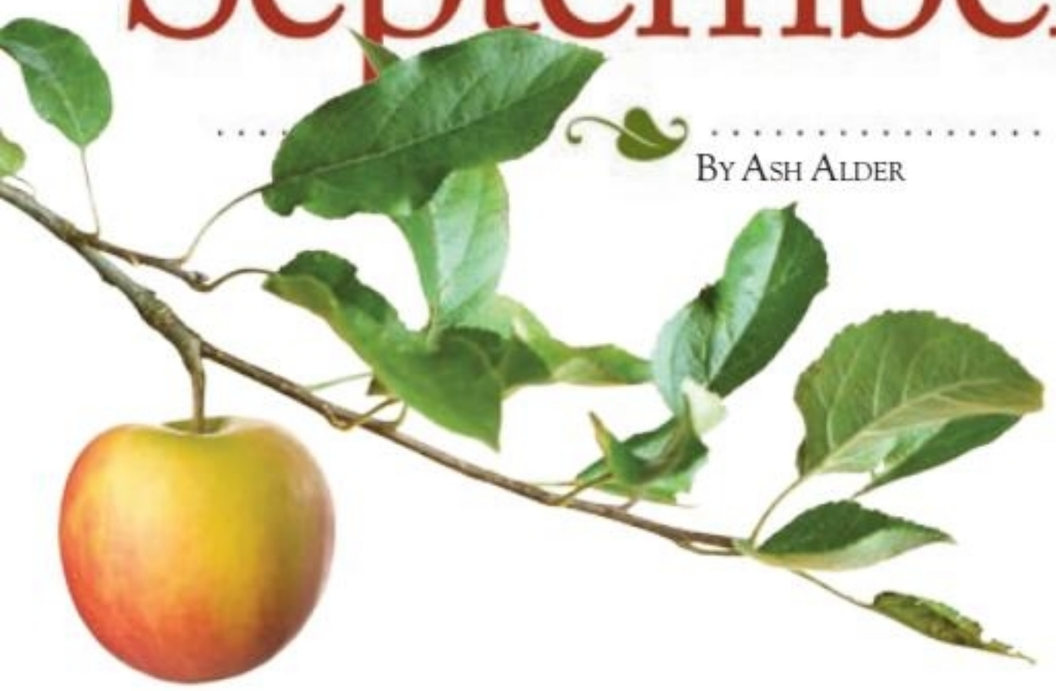
ALMANAC

September

By Ash Alder



Soft thuds of September apples tap at the windows of ancient memories.

This is how it always goes. Long before the leaves turn golden-orange-scarlet-purple, we feel the subtle yet sudden arrival of fall. We can smell it in the air. Even our skin has memorized this electric instant.

We open the kitchen window.

Inside, chrysanthemums in mason jars and herbs in tidy bundles, hung to dry. Outside, a murmuration of swallows flashes across the whispy-clouded horizon, confirming what we already know: Autumn is here. This moment of recognition is embedded in our bones.

Among the harvest — winter squash and lettuce greens — Rome Beauties call for homemade pie. Brilliant red spirals of skin fall away with each smooth crank of the apple peeler, spelling out a sacred message on the countertop. We flash back to grade school, remember twisting the stems of our lunchtime apple to see whom we might marry.

Soon, the trees will be naked as the apples on the cutting block. We cut them into perfect slices, toss them in brown sugar, cinnamon and nutmeg. Autumn's first breeze filters through the open window — a dear, bright-eyed friend returning home with stories and souvenirs.

Harvest Season

September apples call to mind Pomona, Roman goddess and virgin wood nymph depicted as keeper of the orchards and fruit trees. The harvest she effortlessly carries in her arms reminds us of the sweet abundance of this most prolific season.

According to the *Old Farmer's Almanac*, one of the best days for harvesting this month is with the new moon on Sept. 1. The full moon rises on Saturday, Sept. 16, which also happens to be International "Eat an Apple Day." Lakota tribes associated this moon as the time when the "plums are scarlet." For the Omaha, it rose "when the deer paw the Earth."

On Friday, Sept. 22, the sun enters Libra (the Scales) on the autumnal equinox. We look to nature and our gardens to remind us of our own need for balance and harmony. Day and night will exist for approximately the same length of time. Literally and figuratively, now is time to reap what we have sown.

The Feast of the Archangels is a minor Christian festival observed on Friday, Sept. 29. Also called Michaelmas, this celebration honors the angelic warrior who protects against darkness.

As autumn days grow shorter, we acknowledge the dance between lightness and dark.

For man, autumn is a time of harvest, of gathering together.
For nature, it is a time of sowing, of scattering abroad.

— Edwin Way Teale

Crock-Pot Apple Butter

Ingredients

6 pounds apples (variety)
1 1/2 cups sugar
2 teaspoons cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg

Preparation

1. Peel, core and slice apples.
2. Combine apples, sugar and spices in a Crock-Pot; cover and cook on high for one hour.
3. Remove lid, and cook on low, stirring occasionally, until apple butter reaches a spreadable consistency and is dark brown in color. Cook time will vary, depending on the types of apples you use.
4. Transfer apple butter to hot, sterilized jars.

The milkweed pods are breaking,
And the bits of silken down
Float off upon the autumn breeze
Across the meadows brown.

— Cecil Cavendish, The Milkweed

Arts Calendar

Duplin Winery Grape Stomp

9/9

She ROCKS Fundraising Luncheon

9/12

Basketball Tip-Off Dinner

9/21

9/7 Wilmington's Epicurean Evening
5:30 p.m. Chefs, bakers, brewers, and vintners from 28 local restaurants will compete and prepare dinner for 500 guests. The judges (chefs) will present awards. Proceeds benefit the Methodist Home for Children. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt St., Wilmington. For tickets and info: wilmingtonee.com.

9/8–10 Yoga Teacher Training
5 – 9 p.m. (Friday); 12–7:30 p.m. (Saturday); 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Sunday). Hands-on anatomy yoga teacher training with Jess Hartmann, focusing on muscles and joints. Admission: $325–375. Wilmington Yoga Center, 5329 Oleander Drive, Suite 200, Wilmington. Info: (910) 350-0234 or www.wilmingtonyogacenter.com.

9/9 Duplin Winery 41st Annual Grape Stomp
1 – 6 p.m. 41st annual grape stomp celebration with live music, wine tastings, food, and vineyard tours. Admission: $20. Duplin Winery, 505 N. Sycamore St., Rose Hill. Info: (800) 774-9634 or www.duplinwinery.com.

9/9 Street Fest at Progress Point
4 p.m. – 8 p.m. An event hosted by the local business owners of Progress Point, featuring live music, local brews, games for kids and adults, a fashion show, and specials at every store. Ten percent of proceeds will go to support Good Shepherd Center. Progress Point, 1437 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington.

9/11–29 Yoga Lifestyle Teacher Training
7 a.m. – 6 p.m. Kunga yoga lifestyle teacher training with Heather Metzler, featuring Hatha yoga physical practices with an emphasis on Vinyasa and specialty classes. Admission: $2,950. Wilmington Yoga Center, 5329 Oleander Drive, Suite 200, Wilmington. Info: (910) 350-0234 or www.wilmingtonyogacenter.com.

9/12 She ROCKS Fundraising Luncheon
11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Fundraising luncheon to benefit She ROCKS, a nonprofit organization that funds research for ovarian cancer. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt St., Wilmington. For tickets and information: (910) 620-3953 or info@she-rocks.org.

9/13-16 The New Coastal Retreat Workshops
A collection of hands-on workshops taught by professional instructors and inspired by our coastal location, featuring workshops for paddleboarding, cocktails, succulents, and more. Times vary for each workshop. Admission: $35–75. See website for each workshop's dates and prices. Landis-Smith House, 221 S. Lumina Ave., Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 279-5530 or www.thenewcoastalretreats.com.

9/15-16 5th Annual Carolina Beach Dragon Boat Regatta and Festival
6 p.m. (Friday); 9 a.m. (Saturday). Annual dragon boat race and festival in Carolina Beach, featuring live music performances and various food, beer, and art vendors. Admission: Free. Carolina Yacht Basin and Marina, 216 Canal Drive, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 599-2879 or www.carolinabeachdragonboat.com.

9/15–17 Seaglass Salvage Market
9 a.m. – 3 p.m. (Friday); 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Saturday). Monthly indoor/outdoor market filled with upcycled, recycled, and repurposed furniture and home décor items, salvage pieces perfect for DIY projects, yard and garden décor, jewelry and local honey. Admission: Free. 1987 Andrew Jackson Highway (Hwy 74/76), Leland. Info: www.seaglasssalvagemarket.com.

9/16–17 Riverfront Family Market
9 a.m. – 6 p.m. Outdoor market featuring local

Pink Floyd Laser Spectacular

9/22

A Taste of the Town

9/26

Wiley Cash Book Signing

9/30

vendors, music, food & beer, and family-friendly activities. Admission: Free. USS North Carolina Battleship Park, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. For info: (910) 257-5797.

9/16-17 Summer Harvest Festival

9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Local vendors and artisans alike come together to kick off the autumn season at Poplar Grove Plantation, featuring plantings for winter, food, and activities for all ages. Admission: Free. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 US Highway 17, Wilmington. Info: (910) 686-9518 or www.poplargrove.org.

9/20 Youth Program

3 – 3:45 p.m. "What You Need to Know About Dogs." Read *Go Dogs Go!*, make paper cut-out dogs, and listen to a speaker talk about dog care and safety. Admission: Free. Wrightsville Beach, 303 W. Salisbury St., Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-2569 or www.wbmuseumofhistory.com.

9/21 2nd Annual UNCW Men's Basketball Tip-Off Dinner

Second Annual Men's Basketball Tip-Off Dinner, featuring guest speaker Roy Williams, head coach of UNC Men's Basketball program. UNCW Burney Center, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3236 or www.uncwsports.com.

9/21-24 3rd Annual ARTfall Juried Art Show and Sale

10 a.m. – 5 p.m. An arts show and sale celebrating local talent in downtown Wilmington. Part of the American Craft Walk Wilmington. Admission: Free. Community Arts Center, 120 S. 2nd St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-1788 or www.wilmingtoncommunityarts.org.

9/22 Pink Floyd Laser Spectacular

7:30 p.m. A multimedia laser and light show, featuring the music of Pink Floyd on Thalian Hall's Main Stage. Admission: $22–40. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

9/22 Fourth Friday

6 – 9 p.m. Downtown galleries, studios, and art spaces open their doors to the public in an after-hours celebration of art and culture. Admission: Free. Various venues in Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-0998 or www.artscouncilofwilmington.org.

9/22 1st Annual Benefit Concert for JDRF

7 p.m. – 10 p.m. A live benefit concert by local band the Moondogs, who will be covering The Beatles' album *Rubber Soul*. Silent auction, raffle, and catering will also be available. All proceeds go to the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. Admission: $25 (advance tickets); $35 (at door). Brooklyn Arts Center, 516 N. Fourth St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-2939 or www.fab4jdrf.org.

9/23 Tri-County Community Collaborative Lecture

3 – 5 p.m. The Poe Center of Raleigh presents "Drugs Uncovered: What Parents & Other Adults Need to Know," an interactive program for parents and caregivers. Free with registration required. To register: nctricountysoc.org and click on the link for the Poe Center Drug Prevention Program for Adults. McNeill Hall, UNCW, 5010 Cahill Drive, Wilmington.

9/23 Battleship Alive

8 a.m. – 5 p.m. A chance to interact with World War II Living History Re-enactors performing daily duties and common drills on the battleship. Admission: $6–14. Battleship NC, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.

Summer Harvest Festival

Saturday
September 16
9am-5pm

&

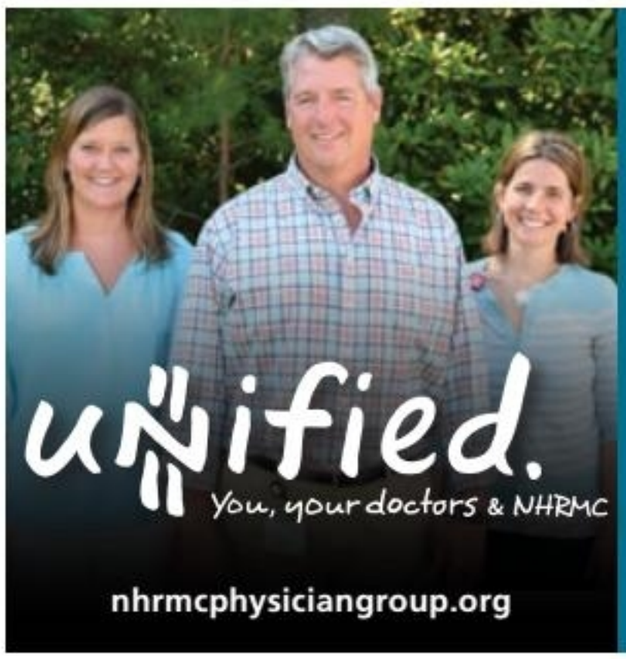
Sunday
September 17
10am-4pm

Carnival Games
Farmers' Market, Plants
Hand-made Arts & Crafts
Farm Animals, Wagon Rides
Food Trucks & You!

Folkstone Stringband &
Mojo Collins

Poplar Grove
PLANTATION

$5 admission www.poplargrove.org



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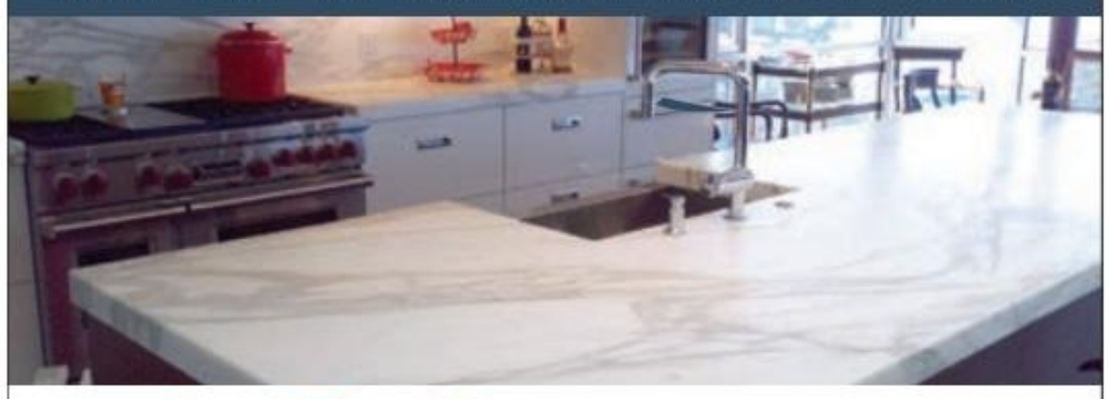

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TICKETS $15
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9/23 American Craft Walk Wilmington
10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Downtown craft walk spanning over a six-block radius, showcasing local artists and vendors. Live performances also included. Admission: Free. Various locations in downtown Wilmington, 100 N. Front St., Wilmington. Info: www.americancraftwalk-wilmington.com.

9/24 Low Country Boil and Brew
4 p.m. – 7 p.m. Annual fundraising event for the North Carolina Coastal Federation, featuring a fresh low- country boil, local beer, live entertainment, raffles, yard games, and more. Admission: $25–30. Wrightsville Beach Brewery, 6201 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (252) 675-1800 or www.nccoast.org/event/brew.

9/26 A Taste of the Town
6 p.m. A culinary sampling tour and contest of downtown Wilmington's best restaurants. Participants will judge the winner of each category. Trolley transportation available. Admission: $50. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

9/27 DREAMing of Fall Fashion Fashion Show and Luncheon
11 a.m. – 1 p.m. Fashion show and luncheon featuring clothes from Elle Boutique of Wilmington. Tickets: $75. All proceeds benefit DREAMS of Wilmington. EAST Restaurant, Blockade Runner Beach Resort, 275 Waynick Blvd., Wrightsville Beach. For information: (910) 256-7111.

9/30 Yoga Posture Clinic
9 a.m. – 11 p.m. Two-hour posture clinic for back pain that breaks down some of the foundational yoga postures that encourage optimal health and safety to your spine. Admission: $35–40. Wilmington Yoga Center, 5329 Oleander Drive, Suite 200, Wilmington. Info: (910) 350-0234 or www.wilmingtonyogacenter.com.

9/30 2nd Annual Oktoberfest Under the Bridge
1 p.m. – 11 p.m. Second Annual Oktoberfest celebration, featuring local vendors, breweries, food trucks, games, and more. Waterline Brewing Company, 721 Surry St. Info: (910) 557-2739 or www.waterlinebrewing.com.

9/30 Wiley Cash Book Signing
3 p.m. *Salt* contributor Wiley Cash will be featured at a reading and signing of his new book, *The Last Ballad*. Admission is free. Barnes & Noble, 850 Inspiration Drive, Wilmington. For info: (910) 509-1880.

9/30 Southport Wooden Boat Show
10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Eighth Annual Southport Wooden Boat Show features a variety of vessels on display, both on land and in the water. Activities for children. Admission is free. 122 Yacht Basin Drive, Southport. Info: 910-477-2787.

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

Monday Wrightsville Farmers' Market
8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside beach market, offering a variety of fresh, locally grown produce, baked goods, plants, and unique arts and crafts. Seawater Lane, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-7925 or www.townofwrightsvillebeach.com.

Monday – Wednesday Cinematique Films
7 p.m. Independent, classic, and foreign films screened in historic Thalian Hall. Check online for updated listings and special screenings. Admission: $7. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

Tuesday Wine Tasting
6–8 p.m. Free wine tasting hosted by a wine professional, plus wine and small plate specials all night. Admission: Free. The Fortunate Glass, 29 S. Front St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-4292 or www.fortunateglasswinebar.com.

Tuesday Cape Fear Blues Jam
8 p.m. A unique gathering of the area's finest Blues musicians. Bring your instrument and join the fun. No cover charge. The Rusty Nail, 1310 S. Fifth Ave. Info: (910) 251-1888 or www.capefearblues.org.

Wednesday Ogden Farmers' Market
8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Local farmers, producers, and artisans sell fresh fruits, veggies, plants, eggs, cheese, meat, honey, baked goods, wine, bath products, and more. Ogden Park, 615 Ogden Park Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtonandbeaches.com/events-calendar/ogden-farmers-market.

Wednesday Poplar Grove Farmers' Market
8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Open-air market held on the front lawn of historic Poplar Grove Plantation

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offering fresh produce, plants, herbs, baked goods, and handmade artisan crafts. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 US Highway 17 N., Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.poplargrove.org/farmers-market.

Wednesday T'ai Chi at CAM

12:30–1:30 p.m. Qigong (Practicing the Breath of Life) with Martha Gregory. Open to beginner and experienced participants. Admission: $5–8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 S. 17th St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Wednesday Wednesday Echo

7:30–11:30 p.m. Weekly singer/songwriter open mic night that welcomes all genres of music. Each person will have 3–6 songs. Palm Room, 11 E. Salisbury St., Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 509-3040.

Thursday Yoga at the CAM

12–1 p.m. Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. Sessions are ongoing and are open to beginner and experienced participants. Admission: $5–8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 S. 17th St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Friday & Saturday Dinner Theatre

7 p.m. TheatreNOW presents August Wilson's *Two Trains Running.* Admission: $18–42. TheatreNOW, 19 S. 10th St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3now or www.theatrewilmington.com.

Saturday Carolina Beach Farmers' Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Outdoor "island-style" market, featuring live music and local growers, producers and artisans selling fresh local produce, wines meats, baked goods, herbal products, and handmade crafts. Carolina Beach Lake Park, Highway 421 & Atlanta Ave., Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-2977 or www.carolinabeachfarmersmarket.com.

Saturday Riverfront Farmers' Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside market featuring local farmers, producers, artisans, crafters, and live music along the banks of the Cape Fear River. Riverfront Park, North Water St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtondowntown.com/events/farmers-market.

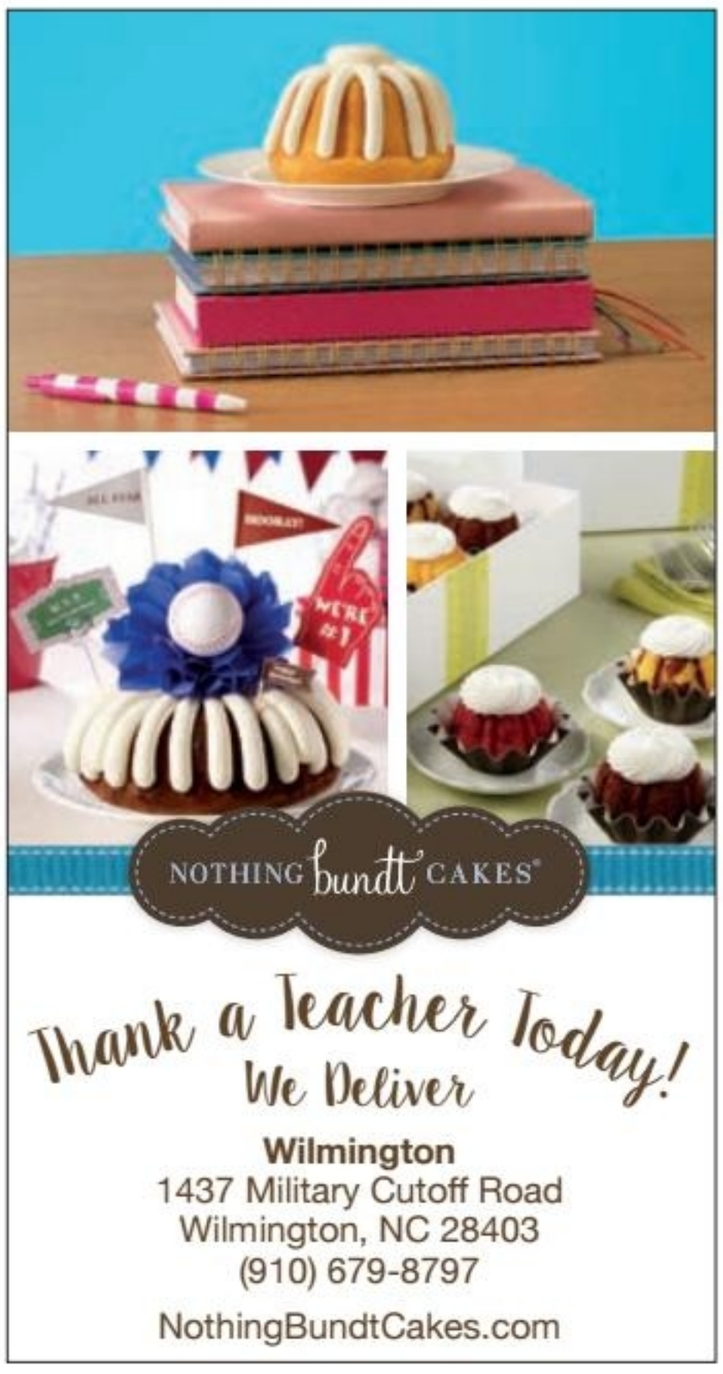
Sunday Wilmington Artisan Market

10 a.m. – 3 p.m. A weekly artisan market in downtown Wilmington featuring local art, jewelry, and other handmade items by more than 30 rotating artists. Riverfront Park, North Water St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 232-2309 or www.facebook.com/Historic-Downtown-Wilmington-Marketplace-1377439359159975/.

Sunday Bluewater Waterfront Music

4 – 7 p.m. Summer concerts on the waterfront patio. Band schedule available online. Admission: Free. Bluewater Waterfront Grill, Four Marina St., Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-8500 or www.bluewaterdining.com.https://www.facebook.com/bluewaterdining.

DINING GUIDE



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Port City People

2nd Annual Tickled Pink Bachelor Auction
A Benefit for the NHRMC Foundation

Ironclad Brewery

Saturday, July 22, 2017

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Sarah Shouse, Danielle Mitchell

Sai Collins, Brian Babock, Mike Orsa, Ray Hales, Laren Avery, Ben Zourgani

Sandie & Mike Orsa

David Johnson, Sara Smith

Mary-Hannah Evans, Ashley Bell, Brittany Parish, Renee Mangum

Randi Fucili, Gayle Beese

Lane Greenwood, Amanda Elias

Branson Lowe, Lisa Doyle, Julie Godley, Andrew Hall, Melissa Ruhl

Amanda Rodriguez, Megan Downing, Rebecca Christiansen, Katie Regan

Reagan Strickland, Kristin Hufham, Cassie Harris, Lyndsay Harkey

Brittany Rhodenhiser, Virginia Wade, Karina Molamb, Colby Saucier

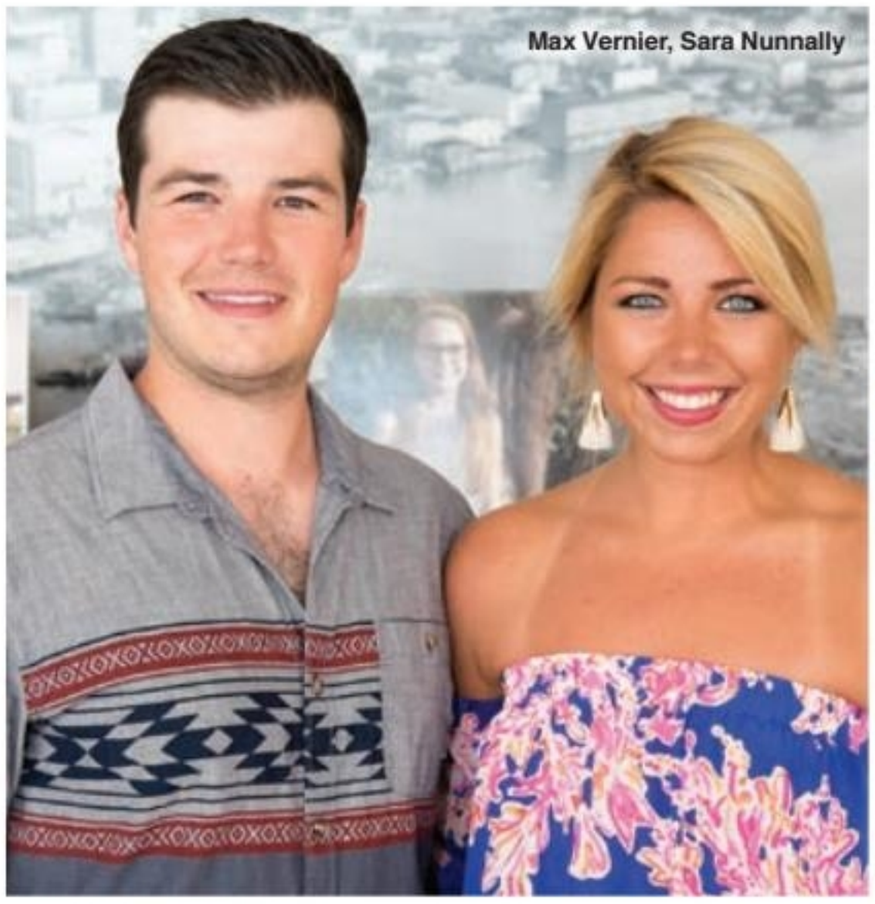
Lindsey Johnson, Alister Chick

Port City People

Pipeline to a Cure
A Cystic Fibrosis Foundation Benefit Gala
Wilmington Convention Center

Saturday, July 29, 2017

Photographs by Bill Ritenour


Max Vernier, Sara Nunnally

Jon & Sheila Evans

Josh & Lori Watson

Kevin & Diane O'Grady

Leslie & Mark Tyler

Preston Aldridge, Melissa Bryan, Nicoa Clemmons Dunne

Mark & Jaimie Lilley, Ivey & Kevin Sikorski, Jackie & Mike Feasel

Alston & Maggie Hatch

Leslie & Mark Tyler

David Crouch, Jessica Kirst

Port City People

Fourth Annual Cape Fear Purple Heart Dinner

Wilmington Convention Center

Saturday, August 12, 2017

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

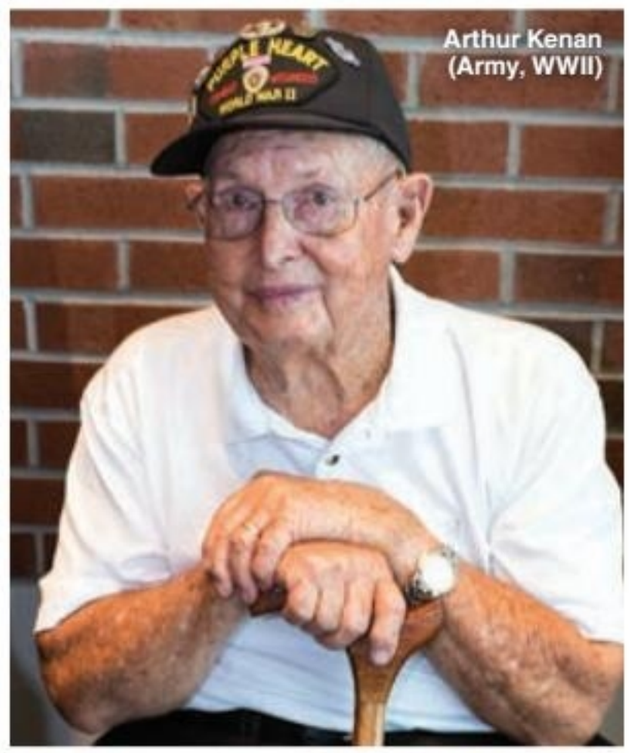
Jon Sammis
(Navy, Korea)

Johnny Wilson (Army, Vietnam)
Ben Van Etten (Army, Vietnam)

Michael Stringfield
(Army, Vietnam)

Ron Butler
(Army, Vietnam)

Shane Ugliono (Army, OIF)
David Buzzard (USMC, OEF)
Michael Pirozzi (USMC, OIF)

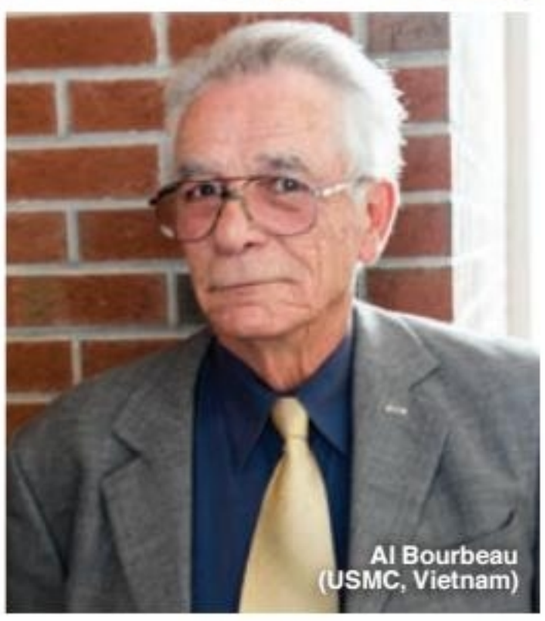

Arthur Kenan
(Army, WWII)

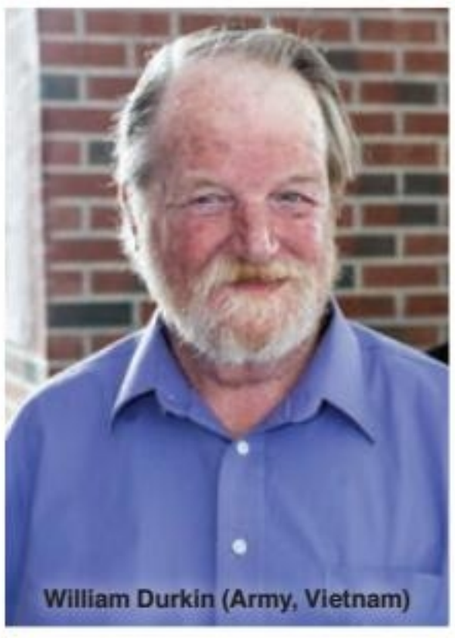
Jimmy Smith
(Army, WWII)

Julius Collins (Army, Vietnam)

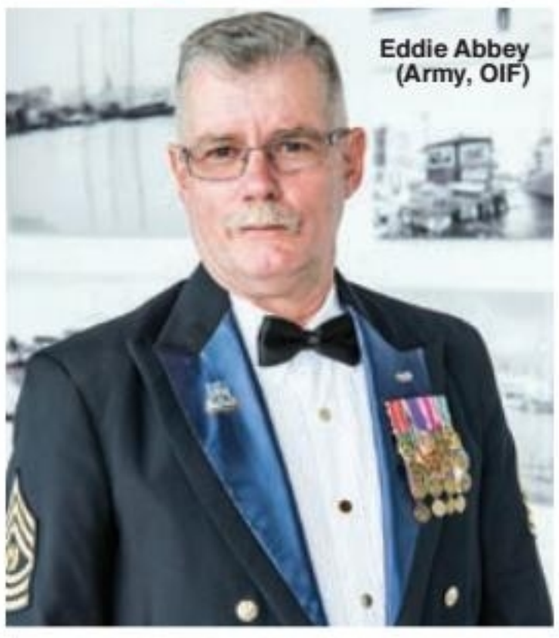
George D.Cooper, III
(Army, Vietnam)

Roland Tiner (USAF, OSW)!


Al Bourbeau
(USMC, Vietnam)


William Durkin (Army, Vietnam)

Ronald Edwards
(Army, Vietnam)


Eddie Abbey
(Army, OIF)

Brandon Ostrander (USMC, OEF)
Danny Martin (Army, OEF)

Port City People

Landfall Art Show Preview Party

Fundraiser for the Landfall Foundation

Wednesday, August 16, 2017

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Gerard Kratchman, Catherine Bonnette

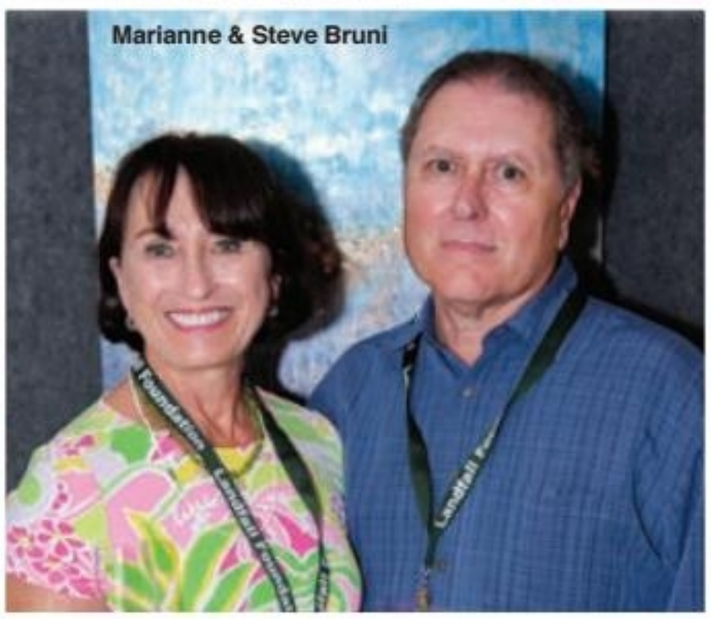
Michelle Clark, Buddy Green

Brenda Work, Sue Thompson

Loulie Key Scharf

Greg & Sharon Hamelin

Martha Edgerton, Lynn Meeker, Beth Foster, Marcia Conway


Marianne & Steve Bruni

Pia Ann Robison, Bill Hamlet

Elaine Cooper, Mary Austin, Kay Bilisoly

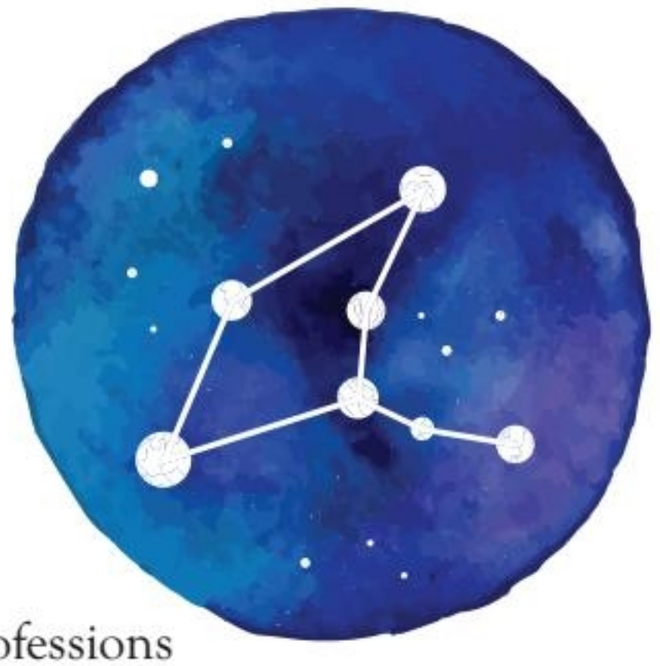
Lorena Redding, Jim Redding, Alison Bernhart

Lana Winneberger

Peggy Vineyard (Best in Show Recipient)

Sweet September

Friends in need are friends indeed



By Astrid Stellanova

Virgo, close your eyes and think of Mars! You're not a Martian, but this is where your energy lies. Known as good communicators, you are attracted to professions that demand a stage. Fellow Virgos include Kobe Bryant, Charlie Sheen, Mother Teresa, Sean Connery, Richard Gere, Pippa Middleton, and Lance Armstrong. Shew-we, Baby Doll, you know how to make entrances and exits, and sure look just as good going as coming! — Ad Astra, Astrid

Virgo (August 23–September 22)
Thoughtful and sincere you are, and that is your calling card, Sugar. You care about your fellow man and we know it. Friendships are golden, and this year makes that clear to all closest to you. You and your inner circle are about as tight as bark on a tree or a tick on a hound dog. This makes your life a whole lot sweeter, and the world an itty bit better knowing you are in it. Now, be alert to a communication. It will need your attention and will pay off to boot.

Libra (September 23–October 22)
What happened wasn't fair, and you knew it, but life has offered some very sweet compensations for your troubles. The stars look a whole lot better this month, and an even better opportunity pops up on the horizon. That person that causes you grief? About the only thing you share is you both breathe air, Baby.

Scorpio (October 23–November 21)
Aw, c'mon. You didn't orchestrate world peace, but then, you didn't fire a missile at North Korea. Here's what you can do in your own little corner of the world. Turn off the telly and take a walk. Leave the office. Bay at the moon if you wanna. But don't treat the checkout line at Harris Teeter like it's the suicide prevention line.

Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)
You've been looking like you lost your platoon, but Sugar, you might need to know this little tidbit: You at least have a clue where you are going. Those around you don't. Stop following the lost and take back control; you have some valuable intel and plenty of people who would give you a helping hand.

Capricorn (December 22–January 19)
Your give-a-damn meter is broken, Darling. Everybody is cracking up, watching you square your shoulders and standing up for yourself. About time, they are saying to themselves. Before you tangle with the boss/wife/boyfriend/girlfriend/manager of 7-Eleven step back and get a grip. You've made your point.

Aquarius (January 20–February 18)
As things are slowly being revealed, you keep your peace and watch it play out. You think you are completely subtle, but Sugar Pie, you've been giving them catfish eyes and everybody noticed. Until the game is over, wear shades. Meantime, an investment in something you know a good bit about is worth a closer look.

Pisces (February 19–March 20)
A bestie has risen up in life, and they act like they think they're the manager at Jo-Ann Fabrics. Indulge them a little. They need your kind words because what you say and think matters more to them than anything. Meanwhile, be mindful of your health and check your craving for Blue Bell ice cream.

Aries (March 21–April 19)
Summer has taken the air out of your sail, and you're feeling it. By the time you settle yourself down in a chair and take a rare break and a deep breath, it's a lot like Zeus sucking the oxygen out of the room. Honey, you have no clue that your idle is a lot of folks's high gear. Read a book; take a nap. Give us a break, why dontcha?

Taurus (April 20–May 20)
You've ignored mending fences because you just cannot admit to your stubborn self that you had a role in the breakdown. Now you gotta choose: Would you rather be happy, or would you rather be right? This ain't Dr. Phil talking; we all know you don't need this person like they need you. So go for the high road.

Gemini (May 21–June 20)
Just when you thought your achy breaky heart was done for, good fortune smiled. It's like that for you; you take to your bed, moping and moaning, and then the sun shines again. Honey, you are going to like the astral forecast because you get lucky on so many levels it ain't even real. The odds break in your favor.

Cancer (June 21–July 22)
You've got a concealed weapon that has a whole lot of power: your never-fail charm. It's often concealed because you know that you could rely upon it too much and be less authentic, but you are better than that. There's a sneaking suspicion building up that you are more intuitive than you knew.

Leo (July 23–August 22)
Here's a snapshot: you get up from a nap, roar a little, then fall back onto the sofa. Snap outta this cycle, you lazy feline. Time to move out and do your own hunting. The object of your considerable desire is prone to change, so focus, Sugar, focus. By feeding time, you will have the meal you deserve.

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

A Jarring Truth

Grandma knows best

By Clyde Edgerton

A dad is at home, talking on his smartphone with his 13-year-old son, Grayson, who is across the state at Grandma's for a week. This is Grayson's second day.

"How's it going?" asks Dad.

"Fine. Grandma is, ah, putting zucchinis in jars. She's been at it all day."

"You mean cucumbers. She's making pickles. She does that every year. She's 'canning.'"

"No, Dad. It's jars. Not cans."

"You use jars for canning," says Dad.

"Then why don't they call it 'jarring'?"

"Don't know. Hadn't thought about that. Have y'all been in the garden?"

"She has."

"How about you?"

"I've been inside. It's hot out there."

"OK. But—"

"I told her I could look up some YouTube videos on gardening. She talked about her garden all morning. Her tomatoes and stuff."

"It's very important to her."

"I found some videos on how to grow tomatoes and stuff, but she—"

"Son, she's been growing tomatoes for over 50 years."

"Yeah, but like she's never seen any YouTube videos on growing them. She didn't even know what YouTube was, Dad."

"I don't think—"

"I found a bunch of videos but she didn't—"

"You should have gone out and helped her pick those cucumbers, Son. You should be helping her. Have you done anything this morning except stare into that phone?"

"Dad, I can learn everything she knows about growing tomatoes in about 15 minutes—with like, say, three five-minute videos. I found one that shows—"

"Put up your phone and go help your grandma."

"Da-ad."

"Do it. And call me back in one hour, or you lose your phone for a half-day when you get back home."

"A half-day!? "

"That's right."

"OK."

One hour, four minutes later:

"OK, Dad, I helped her. You won't believe it. I'm so glad Mother buys pickles already made."

"Why?"

"For one thing, you have to have all this equipment—these tongs and jars and funnels. And before you get going, the cucumbers have to sit in this water that has all this vinegar and stuff in it for like 12 hours before you even do anything, and then she has to boil all this water and do all this crazy stuff with steaming rags and a hot stove, and then she has to wait another 24 hours for the cucumbers to sit there in jars full of hot water that cools off and while it's cooling the jars pop which means they sealed. So the jars like sit for one day and one night. All that for some pickles that she could buy at the grocery store."

"Let me speak to her."

"OK."

Grandma speaks. "Hello, Son."

"Mom? How's it going? Making some pickles, huh?"

"That's right."

"I'm sorry you didn't get much help from Grayson."

"Hang on one second. I'm going to step out onto the back porch here . . . OK, he can't hear me now. I'm going to be helping out Grayson after he goes to sleep tonight."

"How's that?"

"When he wakes up in the morning that tiny TV of his will be in the middle of a jar of cucumbers: all boiled, pickled, sealed and out of sight."

Clyde Edgerton is the author of 10 novels, a memoir and most recently, Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers. *He is the Thomas S. Kenan III Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at UNCW.*

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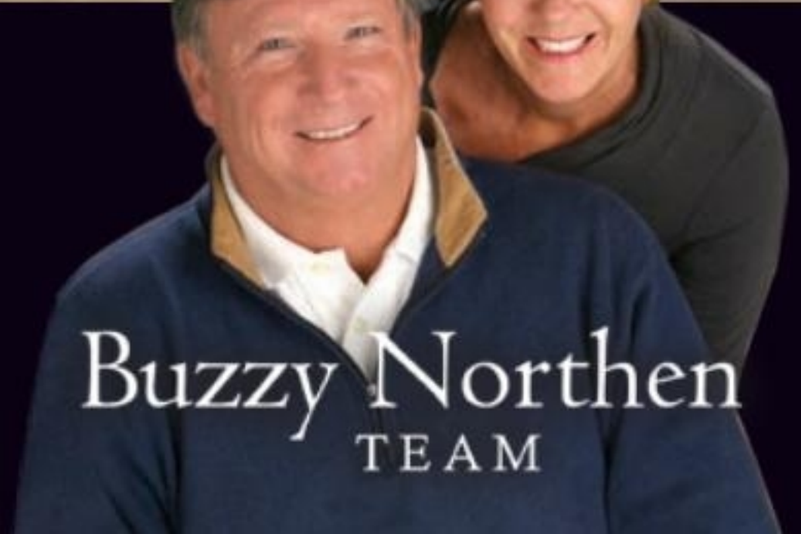

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